

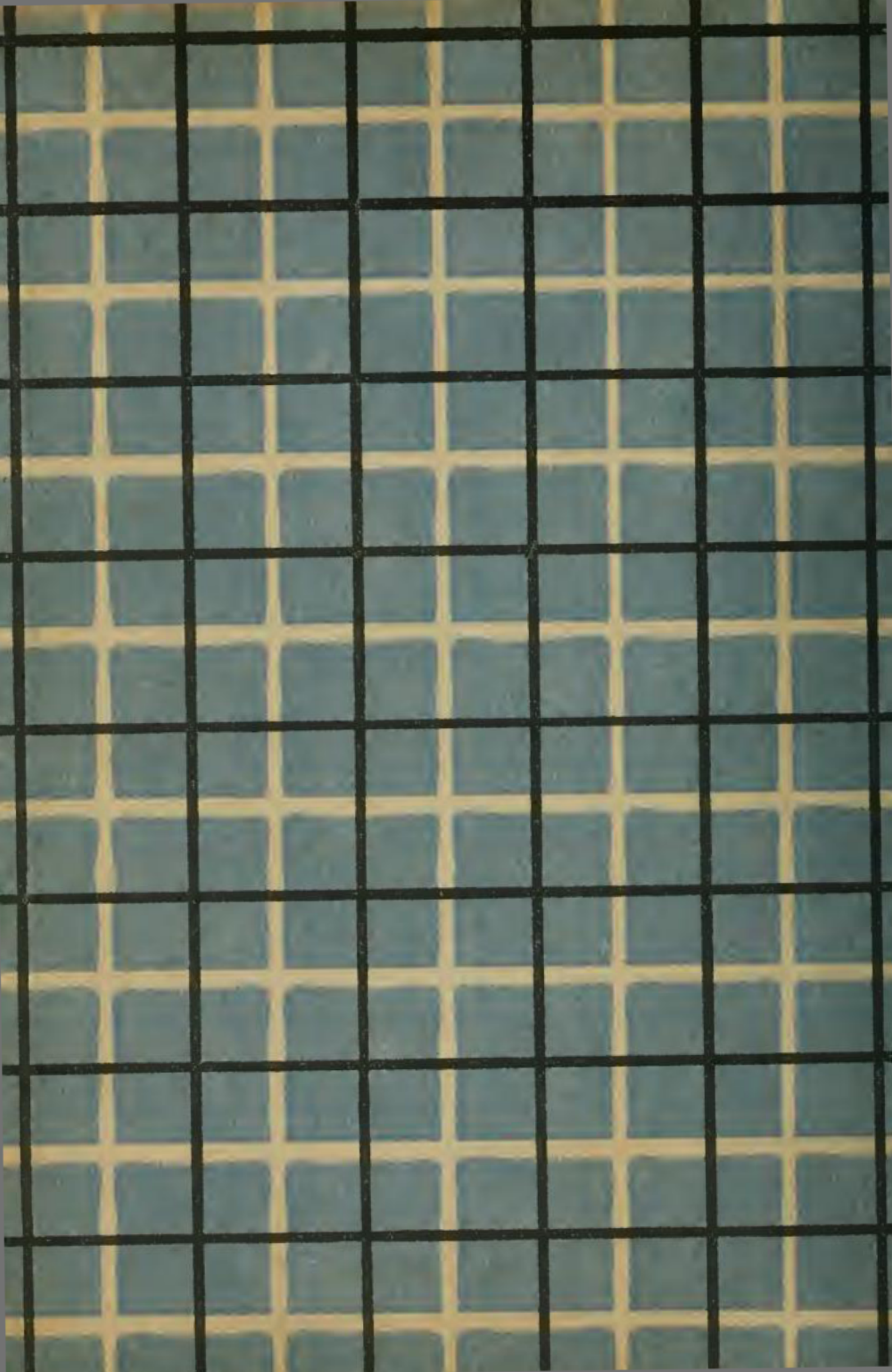
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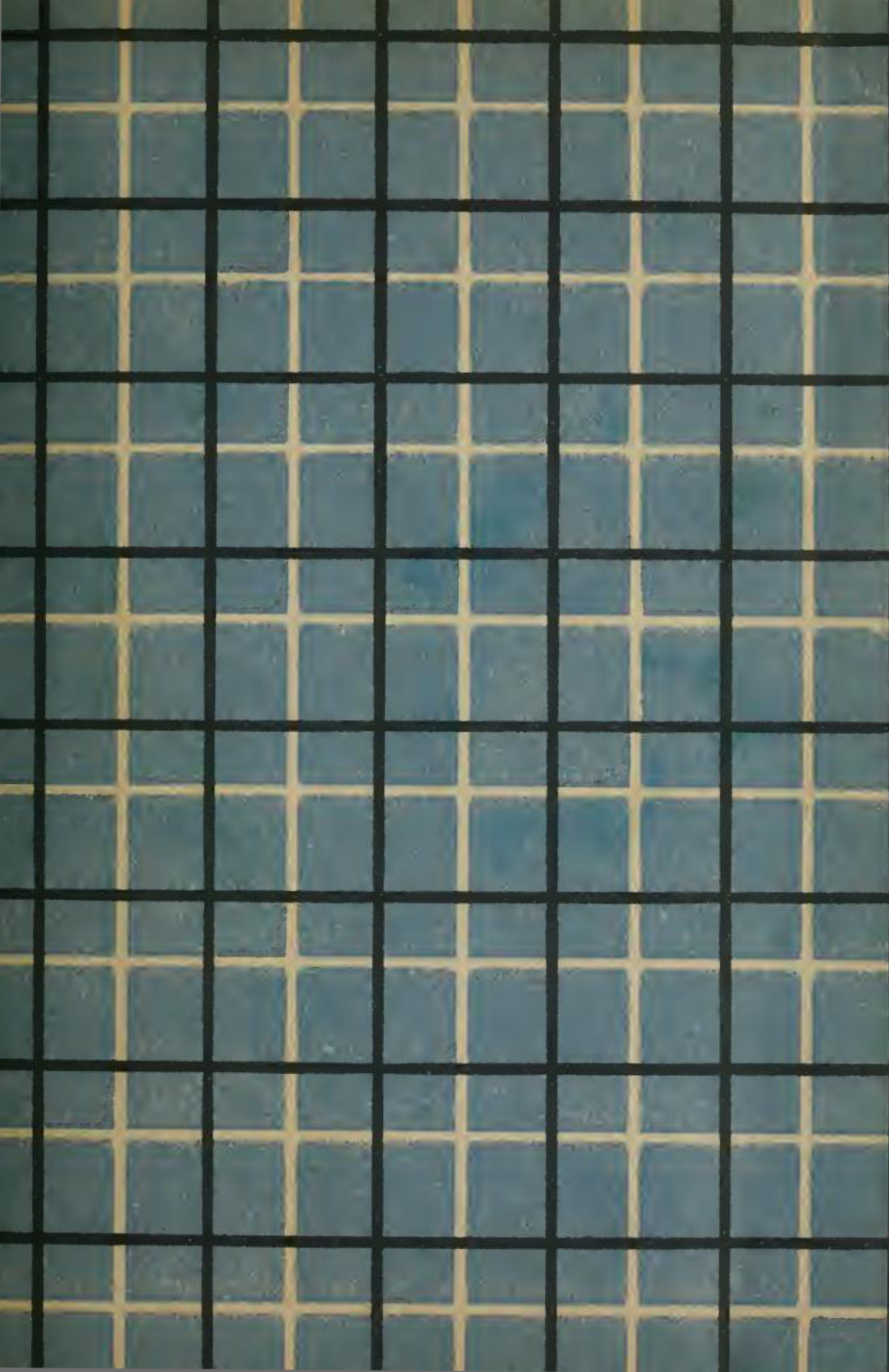
Adventure

The Mystery of the HAUNTED SKYSCRAPER

by
Mel
Lyle







A P O W E R B O Y S A D V E N T U R E

The Mystery of
**THE HAUNTED
SKYSCRAPER**

By Mel Lyle

Illustrated by
Raymond Burns

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1

Mischievous Spirits

"My suggestion," Thomas Power said to his sons, "is that we start our vacation—"

"By unpacking?" Chip asked, setting down the suitcase he had just brought into the apartment.

Mr. Power shook his head. "Oh, no. Unpacking—that's something we can do anytime."

"What were you saying, Dad, when Chip interrupted?" Jack asked.

"Oh, I was thinking we ought to go up to the top of the Empire State Building. Get a view of all of New York, first. Then come down and start going to the places we want to see."

"Say, that's neat," Chip said. "That's real cool."

Jack put up his hand to silence his brother. He listened intently, then he took a step toward the hall door. The click of heels sounded just outside the door. Someone seemed to be moving about restlessly.

Jack, Chip, and their father looked at one another, their expressions thoughtful, puzzled.

On impulse, Chip pushed past his brother and jerked open the door.

A boy about Chip's age, fifteen, stood in the doorway. He was wearing jeans and a not-very-clean T-shirt.

"Detective Wilson?" the boy stammered. "Is—is this where he lives?"

"Yeah," Chip said, "he lives here, but—"

"Come on in, son," Mr. Power said as he came to the door. "What's the trouble?"

The boy moved hesitantly into the apartment. His thin face was strangely pale. "I didn't knock on your door right away, Detective Wilson," he said apologetically. "I was trying to get up the nerve. I'm Ward McGrath."

That was when Mr. Power introduced Ward to his

sons. Ward seemed intimidated by Jack who was big for seventeen, had reddish-brown hair, cut short, and freckles. Chip was almost as tall as Jack, but he hadn't filled out yet. Mr. Power also explained that Detective Wilson had gone to Europe and that they had sublet his apartment.

Ward edged toward the door as soon as he heard that.

"If you're in some kind of a jam," Jack said, "maybe we can help you. We're on vacation. We've got nothing to do."

"Sure, Ward," Chip said. "Why don't you tell us what's up?"

Ward McGrath shook his head. "No. No, thanks," he said, backing away from them. Then, obviously eager to escape, he barely opened the door and quickly slid away.

"What's got him bugged? I wonder," Jack said.

"A lot of boys are in trouble in this town," Mr. Power observed.

"But, Dad, didn't Ward strike you as a nice enough kid?" Jack persisted.

"Oh, definitely." Mr. Power nodded. "A little too timid, perhaps, but—"

"And scared," Chip added. He received a reproachful look from his father and from Jack for that comment. "Well, he said so himself, didn't he? If I hadn't yanked open the door, he would probably have walked off."

"Okay, boys," Mr. Power said. "Let's get back to making plans. Is the Empire State Building our first stop, or isn't it?"

Before they had a chance to answer, the telephone rang.

"This must be for our detective landlord," Mr. Power said as he skirted the luggage on the floor to get to the phone. "We'd better be on our way before we end up taking on one of his cases."

The boys stood watching their father at the phone. The call was for him. And it was making him more excited by the minute.

"You mean I'm to leave at once!" Mr. Power exclaimed.

"Did you hear that?" Chip said.

Jack grimaced. "I sure did. There goes our vacation."

"But Dad promised it to us," Chip moaned.

Mr. Power wound up his phone conversation with a series of "all rights" and "okays." He remained standing at the phone after replacing the receiver, looking at his sons as if uncertain how to begin. The premature gray in his thick black hair made him appear old at this moment. And though he was as tall as Jack, he was heavier and therefore looked shorter.

"You don't have to explain, Dad," Jack said. "We're off again—I know that. Where to?"

"Vacation," Chip said with a shrug. "Who needs a vacation?"

Mr. Power went over to the luggage on the floor and picked up one of the bags absently. "Fellows," he said finally, "I'm terribly sorry, but you can't go with me on this one."

"What?" Jack and Chip exclaimed in unison, and in the same unbelieving tone of voice.

They followed their father as he went into the bedroom, demanding to know why they couldn't go. As Mr. Power opened the bag on the bed and took out some things he wouldn't need on the trip and substituted

others, he explained that there was a brush fire in Griffith Park in Los Angeles which was threatening the park's zoo. His job was to get pictures of the animals being transferred to safety.

"I know you've been with me on assignments as dangerous as this one," he finished. "But we've got this apartment. So stay put for a change. As soon as I get back we'll give New York the once-over. This was just something, fellows, that I—I couldn't turn down."

The metallic snap of the bag's clasps made everything sound settled, final.

"You think it's safe?" Chip asked. "I mean, leaving us alone in the big city?"

"I think so," Mr. Power said, amusement showing in his dark eyes.

"Didn't you notice how scared that kid was who wanted to talk to Detective Wilson?" Chip persisted.

"How could I help but notice?"

"There are a lot of gangs in New York, you know. Maybe. . . ."

"I'm sorry, Chip, but you're not convincing me. No. Not at all."

Mr. Power pulled the repacked bag from the bed. He carried it into the living room, his sons still close on his heels. He put the bag down. As he went to the phone, he said, "I have to call the airport."

The doorbell rang while he was dialing.

"Things are really swinging around here," Jack said as he headed for the door.

Unlike Ward McGrath, this visitor rushed into the apartment as soon as Jack opened the door. She must have been in her seventies. Her white hair rose regally in an old-fashioned hairdo. The severe black dress she wore made her appear even taller and slimmer than she actually was.

"You're Detective Wilson," she said, rushing past Jack and Chip and over to Mr. Power, who had just finished his call. "I must talk to you!" She worried the single strand of pearls at her throat. Her thin hands were heavily veined. "I don't know if this is the sort of thing you—"

"I'm sorry—" Mr. Power began.

"Mrs. Marsh. I'm Mrs. Sam Marsh. I'm alone now that Sam has passed on. I live right in this building. On

the tenth floor. I simply have to—”

“I have to catch a plane, Mrs. Marsh. And besides, I’m not Detective—”

Mrs. Marsh was too excited to hear what he was saying. “There are poltergeists in my apartment,” she said. “They—”

“No kidding!” Jack exclaimed.

Mrs. Marsh seemed to notice Jack and Chip for the first time. “Do you know anything about them?” she asked eagerly. “Mischievous spirits are what they are. Just before I came here, I was having my morning tea. You may not believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. The sugar bowl flew off the table. Flew! I saw it! And if you want proof, the sugar it spilled is on the carpet all along its flight to the hall.”

Mr. Power picked up a bag containing photography equipment and adjusted its strap over his shoulder. “I really must go,” he said. He studied his wristwatch, as if he were figuring out how much time he had left in which to reach the airport.

“I just have a few questions,” Mrs. Marsh insisted, still working the pearls at her throat.

She explained that there had been other evidence of poltergeists at work. Stones once tumbled down the fireplace chimney and rolled out on the hearth. And the many strange noises she had heard had been especially unnerving, because of her husband's recent death.

"I'm moving to another apartment," she said, "but in this building. Do you think the same sort of things will go on happening there, too?"

"No," Mr. Power said, glancing at his watch. "No, I don't."

"You don't think it's necessary, then, for me to move to another building?"

Mr. Power shook his head, picked up the bag he had repacked, and started moving toward the door. "It's my opinion," he said, "that being upset over your husband's death is the cause of all this. Once you're in your new apartment, away from certain emotional associations, everything will be all right."

"I know you're in a hurry." With deliberation, Mrs. Marsh lowered her hands from the strand of pearls and held them at her sides. "I have the feeling that you think this is the figment of an old woman's imagination."

Mr. Power shook his head in denial. "But I do have to go now, Mrs. Marsh," he said, glancing nervously at his watch. "Why don't you stay and talk to Jack and Chip?"

He said good-bye to his sons and gave Jack enough money to take care of expenses while he was gone. As he walked down the hall he turned and waved.

"Don't take any of Wilson's cases while I'm gone," he called back with a laugh.

"I don't understand," Mrs. Marsh said, standing in the doorway gazing after the departing figure. "Oh, my goodness, haven't I been speaking to Detective Wilson? I've never seen the man. No . . . no, I haven't. But this apartment was pointed out to me as—"

Jack interrupted. He explained that they had sublet Wilson's apartment for the summer.

The three of them walked slowly back into the apartment.

"Are you boys going to be here all alone now?" Mrs. Marsh asked.

Chip nodded, grinning.

"We usually go with Dad," Jack said. "Ever since

Mom died, we have. Dad's a press photographer. A photojournalist is what he really is."

"I felt that your father was humoring me." Mrs. Marsh smiled sadly. "When you're my age, you're sensitive—sort of touchy about such things. He *was* in a hurry. He could have been saying anything to console me, so he could be on his way."

"Dad wouldn't do anything like that," Jack said, shaking his head. "He probably feels as I do, that some poltergeist activity is just not explainable."

"And that's the kind I've been enduring, young man."

Chip scratched the back of his head. His blond hair had reddish glints. "I'm not sure I get this," he said. "You mean to say a spirit or a ghost has been doing all that stuff?"

"A prankish, mischievous spirit has! Come along to my apartment and see for yourself!"

Mrs. Marsh's apartment didn't look at all like the one they had sublet. There were big flowers on the drapes, and knickknacks were everywhere. It was warm and stuffy.

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Marsh wailed, "that poltergeist

has turned the air conditioner off in here again." She strode across the room to turn on the cooling unit. "This is just dreadful."

Jack and Chip examined the trail of sugar on the carpet. Near the door, the sugar bowl lay unbroken on its side.

"Stay awhile," Mrs. Marsh said. "You'll see something happen. Heaven knows what. . . ."

They all seated themselves and began to wait. Jack and Chip had picked the sofa. Mrs. Marsh sat opposite them in a high wing chair. At first they sat silently. When nothing happened, Mrs. Marsh began asking them about some of the places they had visited with their father. Jack drew a vivid word picture of his father working with four cameras dangling from his neck.

Finally, the boys decided they had better be going.

As soon as they reached their apartment Chip asked, "What do you think, Jack? You really think she's all there?"

"What do you mean by that? Didn't you ever hear of a poltergeist?"



"Frankly, no. Don't tell me you believe all that stuff!"

Jack didn't have a chance to answer, for suddenly the door was pounded furiously and Mrs. Marsh rushed into the apartment.

"Oh, I've had such—such an awful experience," she half sobbed, half panted. "This is just too much."

The boys helped her to a chair. Chip brought her a glass of water, but she shook her head when he offered it to her.

"It was when you left," she said, "that I stretched out on the couch—where you were sitting. Right away, the couch started rocking back and forth, back and forth. Naturally I scrambled to get up as fast as I could. That's when the light blanket was snatched off of me. The air conditioner had cooled the room very nicely. And when you've reached my age—"

"Excuse me," Jack said, rushing off, "I'm going to have a look."

Chip felt embarrassed, left alone with Mrs. Marsh. He muttered that he'd better go, too, and ran off after Jack.

As Chip approached the open doorway of Mrs.

Marsh's apartment he saw Jack blocking it.

"What gives?" Chip asked, craning to see over Jack's shoulder.

"Look!"

A heavy chair, covered in green leather, was moving diagonally from a far corner. It danced off the floor at times, as if it were controlled by marionette strings.

The boys stood frozen, staring wide-eyed at the chair as it came buoyantly toward them. Then a dish flew off the open knickknack cabinet, heading straight for Jack's head.

Jack ducked. At the same time, he turned and pulled Chip down with him.

2

Curiosity

Chip quickly broke free of Jack. He scrambled to his feet, then dived into the apartment. Down he went on his hands and knees to look under the big chair that had moved out into the center of the room.

Jack rushed into the room, too. "You think there's some mechanism that moved it?" he asked. "Why get a crick in your neck? Now—now just wait a minute. . . ."

Jack began to push the chair over on its back. Chip got up and helped him.

They stood looking at the underside of the chair.

"Just as I figured," Jack said. "Nothing here. Why, this could be a genuine poltergeist phenomenon."

"Phooey!" Chip exclaimed in disgust.

"You know what the poet said: There are more things in heaven and earth than we know anything about."

Chip ignored his brother. He raced around, pulling open closet doors, searching for a real live person who was responsible for the chair moving and the dish throwing. Jack also looked, but he moved much more slowly and thoughtfully.

Chip opened a door in the kitchen. It led to an inside fireproof stairway.

"Hey!" Chip exclaimed. "He could have beat it down these stairs."

The boys ran down the stairs, Chip leading the way. Jack yelled for Chip to stop.

Chip waited for Jack on the landing. There they stood panting, resting. They were perspiring, too, for the stairway was stifling hot.

"If there was somebody," Jack said, "and if this somebody did go down these stairs—"

"Yeah, yeah," Chip said. "What are you trying to tell me?"

"Just that this guy didn't have to go all the way down the stairs. He could have left the stairs at any floor."

Chip's eyes widened. "Yeah. You're right."

They made a simultaneous move to jerk open the door to the hall. The suddenly opened door and the two figures barging through it startled a woman. She was walking down the hall, carrying a number of bundles. She let out a scream of terror, and her bundles flew in every direction.

The scream sent Jack and Chip racing wildly back out of the door and down the stairs faster than ever.

When they reached the basement Jack rested on the bottom step, slumped over, his red head between his knees. Chip leaned against a basement wall.

Chip was the first to speak. "Boy, that was some great idea you had, opening that door."

Jack groaned. He didn't even bother to straighten up.

The long silence that followed made him curious. He looked up. Chip was no longer leaning against the wall.

Wiping sweat from his forehead with his hand, Jack whispered loudly, "Chip?"

No answer came from his brother.

Jack arose quickly and headed for the half-dark furnace room ahead. He found Chip just inside the doorless archway. Deep within the furnace room, a naked light bulb burned dimly. Furnace pipes were pale, weird arms in the dimness.

"Let's get out of here," Jack whispered. "What do you expect to find in here?"

Chip started tiptoeing forward.

"You go ahead, if you want to," Jack said, "but I'm leaving."

A hoarse, apparently disembodied voice said, "You'd better leave." A man suddenly materialized from the darkness to the right of the light bulb. "Are you two of those kids that broke in here the other day? One of them was a redhead, I know that."

Jack and Chip found themselves unable to speak. It wasn't only that the man was advancing ominously toward them, but his deeply creased, sweaty face looked like a grotesque mask.

"We're going," Chip said. "We just got mixed up looking for the exit."

The man growled disbelievingly, but the boys didn't stay to convince him. They backed away, turned, and rushed off. They quickly found a door to the outside.

"I'll bet that creep did all that poltergeist stuff," Chip said. "Which reminds me, we better get back to Mrs. Marsh. We left her all alone, and she wasn't feeling very well.

"That man's probably the superintendent of the building," Chip went on. "That means he'd have a key to every apartment and could rig up phony poltergeist tricks."

"All right. Why would he do that? Have you figured out a motive for him?"

"With a face like his, does he need a motive? He might just be a super-villain."

"Let's stop talking and find how Mrs. Marsh is."

The boys reentered the building and took the self-service elevator upstairs.

As soon as they stepped into their apartment they could see the chair in which Mrs. Marsh had been sitting. She was no longer there. And the complete silence indicated she wasn't in any of the other rooms.

"She probably went back to her apartment," Jack said. "Why should she sit here waiting for us? Whatever gave us the idea that she would?"

But when they rang the bell of her apartment, there was no answer.

"You think she's okay?" Chip asked.

"Sure. Why not?"

"It seems like she's vanished, that's all."

"I don't know about you," Jack said, "but I'm hungry."

The boys went to a nearby cafeteria for lunch. When they stepped from its air-conditioned coolness out into the hot street, the contrast was painful.

A fire truck, siren screaming, tore down the street.

"Boy," Chip said, wiping at the sweat on his face. "Why would anybody pick a day like today to have a fire?"

"They always have fires in New York. Dad's heading for a bigger one—a bigger fire than this one, I mean."

They stopped at a supermarket and bought groceries. Jack had cooked many times before. He didn't mind.

"Even if we ate at a place like that cafeteria," Jack

told Chip, "the dough Dad left with me would go in no time. And Dad might be away longer than he thinks."

As they entered the apartment building, loaded down with big grocery bags filled to the top, Mrs. Marsh hurried across the lobby toward them.

"My two young men," she said, smiling. "Surely, you didn't run off the way you did simply to do your shopping."

"I'm sorry about that," Jack said.

Chip nodded. "Me, too."

"Are you feeling all right now, Mrs. Marsh?" Jack asked.

"I don't want to keep you standing here, holding all those groceries." Her hands toyed nervously with a straw bag. "To make a long story short, when I came back to my apartment and found a chair out in the center of the room—and overturned, mind you—I'd had my fill. Oh, and a beautiful dish of mine was out in the hall, shattered. Well, I've been busy arranging to stay in a hotel until my new apartment is finished."

"Could we have the keys to your apartment upstairs?"

Jack asked the woman hesitantly.

"The keys to that awful place?"

"We're curious," Chip explained. "We'd like to figure out this poltergeist deal."

Mrs. Marsh compressed her lips and shook her head sadly. "I didn't mean what I said about its being an awful place. I spent so many happy years there with my husband."

"Would it be all right for us to—"

"I'm hesitant," Mrs. Marsh said, interrupting Jack, "to have you stay there. My grandson—who's about your age, Chip, maybe a little younger—was staying with me. I sent him home. I was afraid for him. I really was."

Jack and Chip persisted. Finally, Mrs. Marsh reluctantly dug into the straw bag for the keys. "Now you be careful," she warned. "I don't want to be worrying about you. I've enough on my mind as it is."

On the way upstairs in the elevator, the boys decided to drop off the bags of groceries first.

"Dad might not like our getting mixed up in this," Jack said. "After all, he's just taken off. Maybe we

ought to wait a couple of days before getting in a mess."

"Why wait?" Chip said. "A mess is a mess no matter when you get into it. Hey, will you open the door? This stuff is getting heavy."

Before they left for Mrs. Marsh's apartment Chip decided to take his camera along. It was a cross between a Rolleiflex and a Leica and had been given to him by his father as a birthday gift. "A picture might just catch something our eyes aren't fast enough to see," he said.

"Could be," Jack agreed.

They walked silently down the hall together.

Before they reached the door of Mrs. Marsh's apartment Jack stopped and touched Chip's arm warningly. "Wait a minute, Chip," he whispered.

The boys stood tense and motionless in the silent hall.

"I was sure I heard somebody in there," Jack said.

They tiptoed up to the door. There was no question now about the murmur of voices inside.

Jack had the keys to the door in his hand. "Should we go in? What do you think? Mrs. Marsh warned—"

"Open the door, will you? Come on!" Chip said. "I want to find out what this is all about!"

3 *“And the Door Began to Move....”*

Jack elbowed Chip to one side. He put the key in the door, but he didn't turn it.

“What're you waiting for?” Chip demanded.

“Did you hear that?”

Chip bent forward, with his ear turned to the door.

“When I put the key in,” Jack explained, “it sounded as if somebody scooted across the room. Didn't you hear it?”

“Why don't we go in and see what's happening, instead of talking?”

They entered Mrs. Marsh's apartment slowly and cautiously.

Suddenly Jack held up a hand, warning his brother not to speak. Then he pointed toward the swinging kitchen door. It was moving slowly back and forth.

Chip started to rush toward the kitchen, but Jack grabbed him by the camera strap that was slung over his shoulder.

"Let go!" Chip whispered angrily, trying to pull free. "Jack, stop!"

"You want to get clobbered?"

"Yeah. Sure." But Chip suddenly relaxed. "What's the use? The guy's probably all the way down those stairs by now."

Jack shook his head. "I didn't hear anybody running down steps, did you?"

"No. . . ."

Just then there was a scraping sound in the kitchen. A chair, a stool, something had been moved.

The boys stood motionless.

"I heard *that*," Chip said.

His eye spotted something near the fireplace. He dashed across the room. When he returned, he had a poker raised over his shoulder, ready to be used as a

weapon if it should be needed.

"You push the door open," Chip told Jack, "and I'll sail in."

Jack seemed a bit doubtful. Finally, he reluctantly tiptoed over to the door.

Just as he lifted his hand to push on the door, the door started moving toward him. Both Chip and Jack drew back quickly.

They stopped, however, when they saw the rosy-checked face that peered uncertainly into the room. They stood motionless as the pudgy little man came timidly through the door and let it swing shut behind him. The man's clothes were baggy. His gray moustache was as bristly as a toothbrush.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, gesturing with wide-spread arms as he looked at Chip. "Perfect!"

Chip regarded the man, perplexed. "Who are you?" he asked finally.

"The poker, the belligerent stance." The little man appraised Chip as if Chip were a great painting. "Perfect example of aggression."

Chip lowered the poker. He started to tell the man

that Mrs. Marsh had given them permission to come into the apartment.

"To study the poltergeists?" the man interrupted excitedly. "She gave *you* permission? She wouldn't grant *me* permission. And I, after all, am Professor Jamison, the director of parapsychology at Trent University."

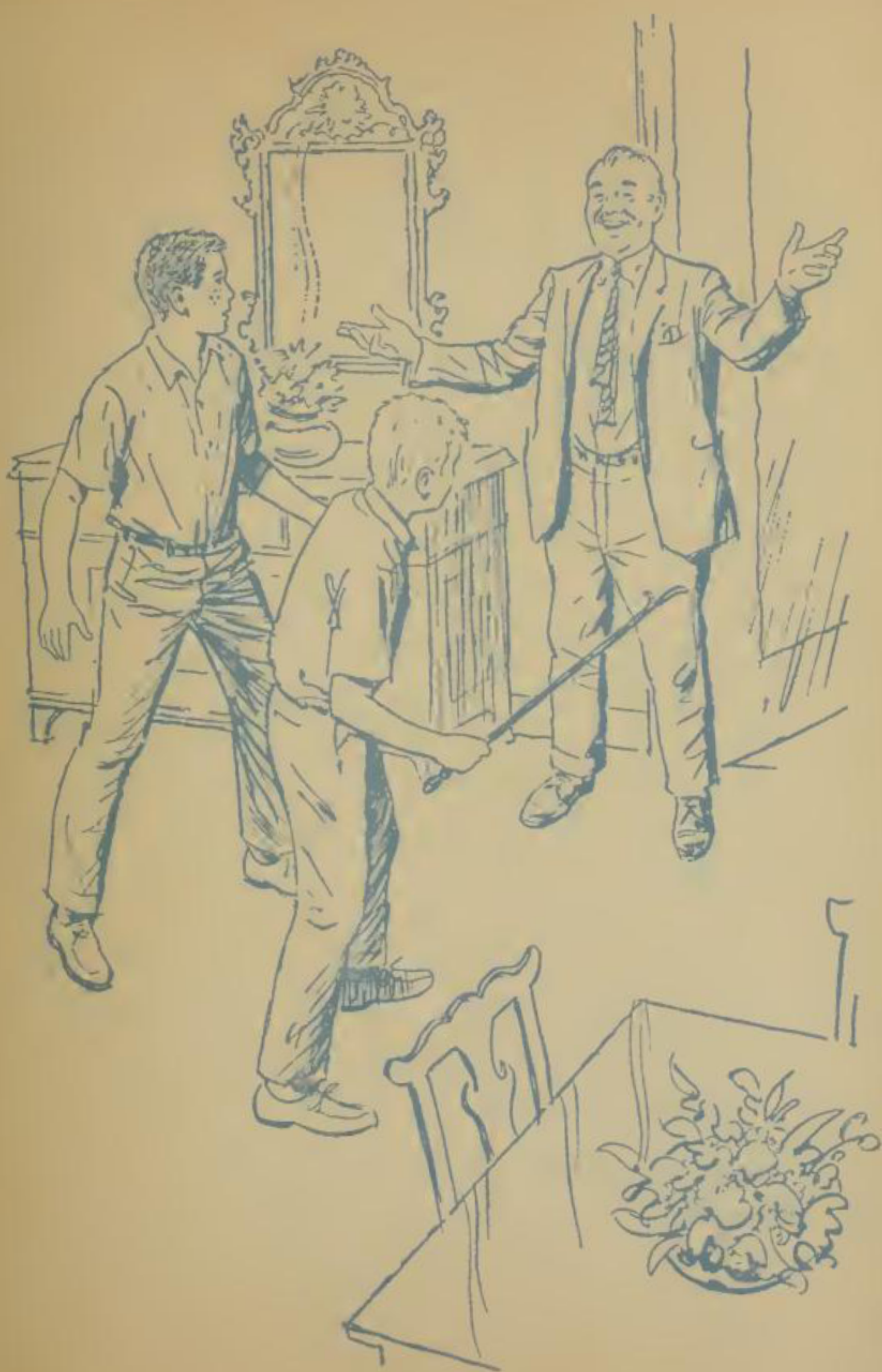
"Well," Jack said, "she certainly did give us permission. I'll admit we did have to talk her into it."

"Amazing! Amazing!" The professor slapped his hands together and rubbed one palm against the other. "She told me in a lengthy correspondence that she didn't want to make more publicity than she already had. For this, I don't blame her." He paced around the boys. "Still, I came hoping to persuade her. The door was open. I walked in. Became engrossed. When I heard the key in the lock—"

"What did you think? That it was the poltergeist?" Chip asked, grinning.

The professor stopped. "Exactly," he said. "Exactly."

He came over to Chip and shook his hand. He thought Chip was Mrs. Marsh's grandson, and he appeared very disappointed when Chip convinced him



that he wasn't any relation to the woman.

"You see," the professor explained, "I believe the grandson is the cause of the interesting things which are happening here."

"How could he be?" Chip asked curiously.

"I was wondering the same thing," Jack said. "I mean, he went home. He's not around. Mrs. Marsh told us that herself."

The professor dropped down on the couch, as though it were time he rested from all his pacing. His short, stocky legs didn't quite reach the floor. He explained that when a teen-ager was having troubles and wanted to get rid of his aggressions in some way, his anger could take the form of poltergeist activity.

"How can it?" Chip asked.

"That we don't know." The professor popped off the couch. "We only know that sometimes there is evidence that this happens."

"Well, tell me this. Maybe you can. Why would this poltergeist want to throw a dish at us? We're strangers. We never even saw this grandson of Mrs. Marsh's. Why us?"

Professor Jamison had resumed his pacing, but he stopped now as if someone had shouted halt. He slapped his hands together. "A dish was thrown at you?" he asked, aghast.

"It's nothing to look so worried about. Jack and I ducked. We weren't hit or anything."

"Why does that bother you so much?" Jack asked the man. Professor Jamison remained silent. "Why don't you tell us?"

"Perhaps I should. Yes. Yes, it might be safer that you know. It is apparent to me—Professor Jamison—that the poltergeist doesn't like your interference. You remember how I fled into the kitchen when I heard the key in the door. I'm an interferer, too. But in your case, it may be worse. You are both teen-agers." He shrugged. "Time alone will tell. One thing you don't have to worry about is locking up. I'll turn the front door latch when I go. I'll just be a few more minutes."

After they left Professor Jamison, Jack and Chip paused in the hall. There was a murmur of voices in Mrs. Marsh's apartment.

"The guy's talking to himself," Chip said. Jack

laughed. "And what's more, he's answering himself. That's what we must have heard before. Boy, what a character he is."

Jack was smiling now. "I guess he figures there's no one better to talk to. After all, he is the great Professor Jamison."

Back in their apartment, Jack started taking the groceries out of the bags and putting them away. Every now and then he glanced at Chip who stood with the camera still slung over his shoulder. "What's wrong with you?" he asked finally.

"You mean you can't put that stuff away yourself?"

"Oh, sure, sure. I meant you look worried. You look like the old prof when he acted like we were doomed."

"You don't think I took him seriously? All that stuff about the poltergeist being out to get us."

"That plate came right for our heads, didn't it? You can't deny that."

"And it missed. Don't forget that."

"Maybe it's got the range now. Next time could be different." Jack blew up the grocery bag he had emptied. He slapped it hard and it burst with an explosive pop.

"Bang! We might even go up in smoke. Or be flattened by having something dropped on us. Out West—in some little town in California, I think it was—rocks all of a sudden came raining down out of the sky. It was all a big mystery. They never did figure those rocks out."

"That sounds goofy."

"You're not fooling me, Chip. But maybe it's just as well you are scared. Especially with Dad three thousand miles away."

"Oh, sure I'm scared," Chip said, grinning. "Don't you hear my knees knocking?"

"I still think it's a good idea not to stick your neck out."

Chip walked across the room, taking the camera strap off his shoulder. He glanced out the front window as he put his camera on an end table. "Say," he said, "what's going on down there? Somebody must be hurt. There's an ambulance. . . ."

Before Jack reached the window to take a look, Chip rushed past him. "Come on, Jack!" he said. "You can't see enough from the window! I want a ringside seat!"

4 *Do Poltergeists Make Mistakes?*

The crowd on the sidewalk overflowed into the street.

Jack and Chip started pushing their way into the crowd, but they soon stopped. It was too hot for that sort of thing.

"What happened?" Jack asked a shabby-looking man beside them. "Do you know?"

"Some guy passed out from the heat. That's what I heard, anyhow. You won't catch me shoving in this weather to check it out. Oh, no."

The boys loitered at the edge of the crowd, which was beginning to thin out a little.

"Let's go back upstairs, where it's cool," Jack said.

"You know," Chip said, "going to a movie might not be such a bad idea."

"I'm wondering how the professor's making out," Jack mused.

As the boys walked toward the entrance of the apartment building, they overheard someone walking behind them say, ". . . a glancing blow. Otherwise, he would have needed a hearse, not an ambulance. . . ."

Jack turned and so did Chip. Through the thinning crowd, they could see a shattered window box on the sidewalk. The window box must have been the point of interest around which the crowd had grown, the boys realized.

To reach the window box, the boys had to buck the stream of pedestrians. Suddenly, Jack grabbed Chip by the arm. "Chip!" he exclaimed. "You think it could have been the professor who was hit? Remember what I said about those falling rocks out West that—"

"This wasn't rocks. Hey! You don't think that window box was dropped on him, for interfering. . . ."

A thin old man carrying a gnarled cane and wearing

sunglasses stood proudly near the smashed window box. He chewed gum fast, mumbling that he had seen it all.

"What did the man who was hit look like?" Jack asked.

"You a reporter?"

Before Jack could answer, a perspiring, red-faced policeman approached the witness of the accident. The officer removed a notebook from his hip pocket. "Name and address, please," he muttered without preamble. He sounded bored by the routine and tired of the heat.

Chip stepped up closer to the witness. "The man who was hit," he said loud and clear, "did he wear baggy clothes? Did he—"

"Yup! Yup!" the thin old man cried, excited by all the attention he was getting.

"All right!" the cop warned Chip. He didn't sound bored now. "Move!" He made a shoving gesture with one arm. "Move! I'm asking the questions around here!"

Nearby, a pneumatic drill tearing up the street started

its chattering racket. The noise made the heat feel even more oppressive.

As they moved away slowly Jack said, "That sure sounded like a dumb question, Chip. A lot of people wear baggy clothes. Just because this guy who was hit wore them doesn't mean he was the professor."

Chip shrugged. "Maybe not. What gets me is that we were just talking about people being conked. And the prof expected stuff to happen to us because we were fooling around with that poltergeist."

Chip turned and looked up the front of the ten-story building. There were many window boxes and air-conditioning units.

"I don't like this," Chip said.

"You don't?" Jack laughed. "I thought *you* didn't believe things fell out of the sky—mysteriously."

"The professor warned us, didn't he? Let's get inside. We might be next."

"It could all be a coincidence. I mean, our talking about something dropping and then that window box letting go."

Chip kept his eyes on the front of the building just

the same as he hurried to the door. "Made it!" he said, obviously relieved, as Jack caught up with him in the foyer.

"This thing sure has got you bugged," Jack said.

"Well, I'm telling you I'd feel a lot better if I knew that the professor was okay. If he was the one hit on the sidewalk, *we* could be next. I don't care what you say about coincidence—"

"Okay. Okay. Before we flip, let's go up to Mrs. Marsh's apartment and see if the professor's there."

They were the only passengers in the self-service elevator. It seemed very quiet and peaceful after the noise and heat of the street.

Jack took care of that by saying, "If you're going to be logical, just because we're inside doesn't mean we're safe. Just for kicks, that poltergeist might cut the cables to this elevator and. . . ."

"Here's our floor," Chip interrupted. "Let's check on the professor."

They stood for a long moment at the door of Mrs. Marsh's apartment, looking at one another as they listened to the ominous silence.

"Doesn't sound like anyone's in there, does it?" Jack said as he dug in his pocket for the key.

But before he had inserted the key all the way in the lock, the murmur of the professor's voice stopped him.

"You were right," Chip said, grinning. "It must have been a coincidence after all."

"I don't know. It just occurred to me that maybe the poltergeist made a mistake. The guy he dropped the flower box on was wearing baggy clothes, wasn't he? Maybe he mistook that guy for the professor."

They walked back down the hall. "I shouldn't think a poltergeist would make a mistake," Chip said.

"Maybe they do. Very little is known about them."

"You mean we're still in danger?"

"Yeah." Jack nodded emphatically. "That's exactly what I mean."

They waited silently for the elevator.

"You think it might be safer walking down?" Chip asked finally.

Jack smiled. "Because of what I said about the cable being cut? I was just needling you a little. I don't really know that we're in danger. We can't take what the

professor said too seriously. He is something of an odd-ball. You don't need twenty-twenty eyesight to see that."

"You're not just saying all this, are you?" Chip paused a moment in thought. Then he brightened. "Say, how about going to a movie? I mentioned it, then we forgot all about it."

The elevator arrived. Its door slid open.

"I'd rather roam around New York," Jack declared. "There's a lot to see."

"Shouldn't we save the sight-seeing," Chip said, following Jack into the elevator, "until Dad gets back from the Coast?"

Before Jack could answer, a boy rushed forward. He tried desperately to keep the elevator door from closing. Chip grabbed the door's edge with both hands to help him.

When Chip looked at the boy more closely he realized it was Ward McGrath. He had a clean T-shirt on now, and he wasn't as nervous as he had been before.

"I was just over at your apartment," Ward said. "Do you fellows still feel like helping me?"

"Sure thing!" Jack said. "How?"

Chip wanted to know what it was all about, too.

As they left the elevator Jack suggested that they sit down in the lobby. "It's hot outside," he said. "And it might be hard to talk if the drill is still in operation."

But they neither went out nor sat down. They stood in a huddle, off to one side of the dimly lighted lobby.

Ward explained that his father was a constructional steel worker, the foreman of a finishing-up gang. His father's men hadn't been able to work lately because two other gangs working on the new Wyndott Building weren't producing, and their work had to be done before the finishing-up gang could take over.

"How are we going to be any good to you, Ward?" Chip wanted to know.

"You can be. You see, I know there's something fishy going on, but I just can't find out what it is. And this is all tough on Pop. He's got to turn out work on schedule. If he doesn't, they won't finish the building on time."

"I've got to ask the same question Chip asked," Jack said. "I mean, just what can *we* do?"

"Snoop around," Ward said. "Would it be okay with your father?"

Chip told Ward how they happened to be alone. "So there's no problem," he finished. "We don't have to get a go-ahead from Dad."

"The problem," Jack persisted, shaking his red head as he spoke, "is how we can find out what's going on at this skyscraper."

"The thing is, I can't snoop around," Ward said.

"You put them on their guard, I suppose."

"Yeah. That's right. It's because they know me."

"The same thing would happen with us, wouldn't it?" Chip asked.

Ward was silent.

Jack nodded. "I'm afraid we'd put them on their guard, too. After all, you'd bring us down there. And they'd know we'd been with you. Unless. . . ."

"Unless what?" Chip asked.

"Let's go back upstairs," Jack suggested. "I have a pretty good idea. We ought to be able to hang around that skyscraper. Hang around as much as we want to."

All the way up to the Powers' apartment, Chip tried to make Jack explain his plan. But Jack would only shake his head or say, "Just wait and you'll see."

Jack put a suitcase on the bed and opened it, just as his father had done in packing for his trip West.

Chip and Ward stood beside him, watching curiously.

"I'm through asking you what you're going to do," Chip said in disgust.

"Here they are!" Jack exclaimed finally. "Good!"

He held up work clothes—trousers and heavy shoes. Jack and Chip had used them in England when they had gone down in a coal mine with their father, who was working on a picture story on an English mine.

"My whole idea," Jack said, "is for us to dress up

like the guys who work around a skyscraper—”

“Why couldn’t you have told us that when we asked you?” Chip complained.

Ward wondered out loud if Jack and Chip could get away with dressing up like workmen.

“I don’t see why not,” Jack said, removing his shoes in order to put on the heavy pair. “There are so many people moving around on a job like that. You know that. I doubt if anybody knows who belongs there and who doesn’t.”

“Okay. Okay.” Chip was still impatient. “Maybe you’re right. But what happens if we get caught?”

“Now, Chip, let’s wait until that happens. Then we can worry about it.”

“A hard hat,” Ward mumbled thoughtfully. “You know, a hat made out of steel. Just about every workman wears one of those.”

Chip went to a hall closet and immediately produced a pith helmet. But they all agreed that even if the pith helmet were painted, it still wasn’t the right shape. And when it came to dirtying up their hands and faces, they couldn’t find anything around the apartment that

they could use for that purpose.

"Let's not spend all day at this," Jack said. "When we get down to the skyscraper, I'm sure we'll be able to find something messy."

"Ward still looks kind of doubtful," Chip said. "Okay, so we do get dirtied up. It'll still be easy to see that we're kind of young to be building skyscrapers. . . ."

They didn't speak during the subway ride downtown. The train was crowded. Chip and Ward found a seat, but Jack had to stand and hold onto a metal strap. He couldn't help noticing some of the perspiring faces crowded around him. A man's hand, holding a vertical bar for support, drew Jack's attention. Tattooed crossed swords decorated the back of it.

Going up the crowded subway stairs leading to the street, the boys still didn't have a chance to talk. Everyone around them was in a hurry. The boys were forced to hurry, too.

Once they reached the street, Ward led them to one side of the walk. "Look, fellows," he said, "I better not go over with you. Right there it is. You see it? Right over there."

On the opposite side of the street and a block down, the steel frame of the Wyndott Building rose into the hot sunlight.

All three of them gazed at the building under construction.

"It's going to be thirty-six stories," Ward said. "It's been going up three stories every two weeks—until lately."

"Now that we're here," Chip said, "I guess we might as well get it over with."

"I don't want to get you guys in a jam—"

"Don't pay any attention to my brother, Ward," Jack interrupted. "You go ahead. We'll leave in a couple of minutes."

Backing away from them, Ward waved. Then he made rubbing motions over his face. "Don't forget!" he yelled.

The various construction noises held their attention when they reached the construction site. The deeply shadowed, cool, damp-smelling interior was strange and unfamiliar.

With his fingertips, Chip wiped some grease off of

a pipe cutter and began to smear it across his face.

"Chip," Jack murmured.

"I thought we decided to—" Chip stopped when he saw the expression on his brother's face.

"Don't look," Jack whispered. "But that big guy over there is on to us. Don't turn!"

"I'm not. . . ."

"He was on the subway," Jack went on. "When he just lit a cigarette, pretending he hadn't stopped to watch us, I saw the crossed-swords tattoo on the back of his hand. That's how I know it's he. I noticed that tattooed hand on the subway."

Without warning, Jack picked up a length of two-inch pipe and walked out of the building with it.

Chip hurried after him.

As Jack dropped the pipe outside, he noticed that the tattooed man was hurrying toward them. Chip looked beyond the man, and he was sure he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Marsh!

The boys also noticed a hoist, or exterior elevator, to their left. A wheelbarrow filled with mortar had just been pulled onto the hoist.

"You know who I saw?" Chip demanded as they hurried toward the hoist. "You'll never guess—"

"All aboard!" the man with the wheelbarrow shouted to them.

The instant the boys stepped onto the hoist, it shot up the tubular-steel tower. It went so fast that they felt as if their stomachs had been left behind.

The man pushed the wheelbarrow onto the planked floor.

Jack and Chip left the hoist on the double.

"Boy," Chip said, "that was the closest thing to a flying carpet that I've been on."

"More like a blast-off." Jack glanced back. "That thing's going down now. That man will catch it and be right up here after us."

Chip grabbed Jack before he could get away. "Wait—now just wait," he pleaded. "You know who I saw down below? I haven't had a chance to tell you. It was Mrs. Marsh. I'm sure of it."

"You're dreaming."

"It felt kind of like a nightmare."

"Chip, it couldn't have been her. What would Mrs.

Marsh be doing here at the skyscraper?"

They jogged across the plank floor until they came to a regular elevator. The trip down was a big improvement over the ride in the hoist.

"We better get going," Chip said when they reached the bottom.

"I have to admit I wouldn't like to be caught by our big friend. Those swords on his hand, I wonder what they stand for. Nothing good, probably."

"You think he followed Ward out to our place? And then followed us back on the subway?"

Jack nodded. "That's the way I figure it."

They could see the street ahead of them, framed by girders. They headed quickly in that direction.

"I wonder what's the matter," Chip said. "Look at that crowd!"

It wasn't nearly as big as the crowd that had gathered in front of their apartment building, but it reminded the boys of what had happened earlier that day.

"There's a lot of junk around here," Chip observed, looking up, "that could fall on you. It would be worse, too, than being hit by a window box."

Jack stared straight ahead. "Say," he exclaimed, "there's Mrs. Marsh! In that crowd. You really must have seen her before. What's she doing here?"

They hurried to find out what was going on, but before they reached Mrs. Marsh, Chip spotted the big man with the tattoo.

They circled wide, to keep him from seeing them, and made it to the outside.

"A lot of good we've done for Ward," Chip moaned, as they stopped on the sidewalk.

"It wasn't all a waste. I know now Ward was right when he said something fishy is going on here. Isn't that weird—Mrs. Marsh being here?"

"There's that space elevator. I don't want to ride in that thing again."

As though sensing danger, Jack glanced behind him. He saw the big man with the tattooed hand. He saw, also, that the man was bearing down on them.

"Run!" Jack yelled.

Chip ran, not taking the time to look back. A big truck pulled up with a roar, blocking the street and preventing their escape. Glancing around quickly, Jack

realized they wouldn't be able to make any time on the sidewalk for it had a ceiling and wooden walls to protect pedestrians from falling pieces of material. It was so narrow that pedestrians had to walk single file.

Without wasting too much time thinking, Jack dashed for the hoist.

As Chip followed Jack onto the hoist, he yelled, "I don't like this thing!"

Jack pulled a lever, but the hoist didn't move. He pulled the lever back and forth, desperately. He looked about frantically—and so did Chip—for another way to set the hoist in motion.

"What's the trouble?"

Looking up, Jack and Chip saw that the front of the elevator was blocked by the big man. It was impossible to get by him. And the floor of the hoist suddenly seemed so small that they felt as if they were in a cage—and trapped!

6

A Grim Warning

"I see you're having a little trouble," the man sneered as he stepped onto the hoist. He continued to face the boys so that he might spot any attempt to escape. "It's a simple 'dead man' control. You've got to keep a steady pressure on it, if you want the rig to keep going."

Jack and Chip didn't say a word. They both knew they were trapped, that there wasn't a thing they could do.

The hoist shot up as it had done before, the man still facing them. But it stopped suddenly, before it reached the top. And it stopped between floors!

"What are you stopping for?" Chip asked. His voice

sounded defiant, he thought to himself.

Jack said, "We want to go to the top."

"Oh, there's plenty of time, Red," the man said. "Look at the view. Straight down. A long way down, isn't it?"

The boys were very close to the man. The floor of the hoist seemed even smaller because they were up so high. The man's eyes were a hard gray. Cruelty was suggested by the trace of amusement in them.

The boys looked at each other, asking with their eyes what they should do.

"You're puzzled," the man said. "I can see that. But I don't know why you should be. Up here, it's private. Great—just great for conversation."

"Conversation about what?" Jack demanded.

"Okay, Red. I see you want to get right to the point."

"I wish you would, too," Chip said, trying to sound tough.

"Your brother, Red, is a tough little monkey."

"I'm not a monkey," Chip snapped.

"Take it easy, Chip," Jack muttered.

"Well, Red and Chip," the man said with a slow

smile which made his eyes appear harder, more cruel, "I suggest you mind your own business. You're just a couple of kids, but we don't want you—"

"What don't you want?" Chip exploded. "For us to find out what's going on around here?"

"Going on?" the man asked with an air of innocent amazement. "Why, what should be going on?"

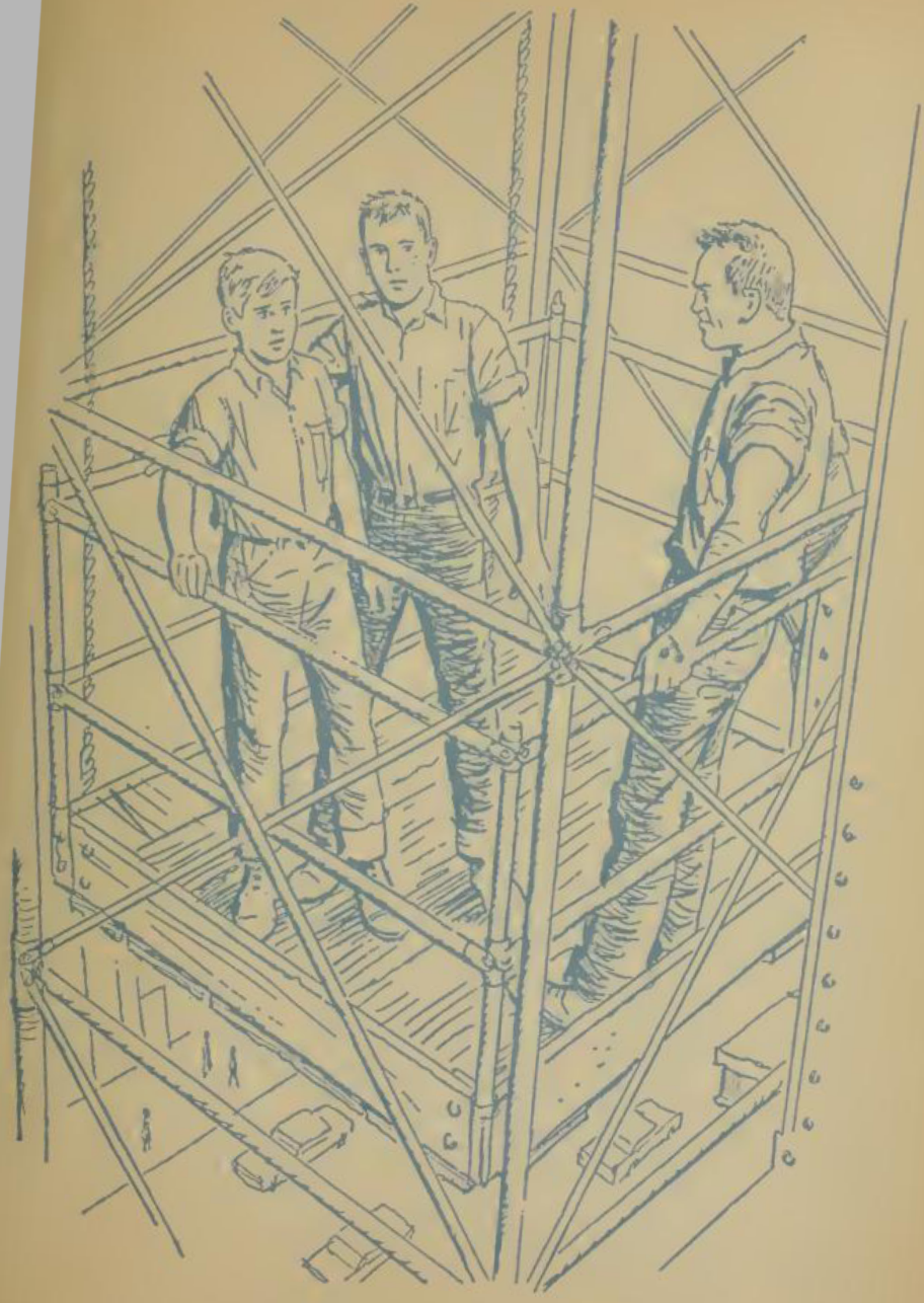
"We don't have to spell it out," Jack said. "You must know."

"And, Red, I also suggest that you speak to your friend—that McGrath kid who brought you in on this. It might be better for all of you if you just minded your own business. You get what I mean?"

"My name's Jack—not Red. And you may as well know, we're not stopping our investigation. I'm sure now that there's something fishy going on. Otherwise, you wouldn't—"

The sudden drop of the hoist cut off Jack's words. It fell so frighteningly fast that it took their breath away. They had the feeling of having stepped into a bottomless hole.

The drop had plainly been a warning. The man made



sure Jack and Chip realized that had been his intention. As soon as they reached the bottom of the shaft, the man said, "Don't mess around. I wouldn't if I were you."

"Wow!" Chip exclaimed after the man walked away from them.

"He warned us, but good," Jack said.

"Another ride in that thing and I'll be set to be an astronaut."

"What gets me is that a big guy like that wouldn't punch us in the jaw. He doesn't seem the type to go in for being subtle."

"You call it subtle—the way he dropped us from the sky?"

"No, maybe that wasn't." Jack was thoughtful for a moment. "You know, this workman disguise is worthless—just plain worthless now. What do you say we find Mrs. Marsh? Why do you think she's here?"

"There's Ward. You see him, Jack? Up near that big dump truck."

The boys hurried over. Ward was eager to learn what they had been doing.

"Now wait a minute," Jack exclaimed. "Did you see that crowd? What was it all about?"

"Arguments like that happen all the time around here. They were fighting about overtime. There's more and more overtime because if a building's not done on schedule, the builder's stuck. He's got to pay a fine. No wonder Mrs. Marsh, in person, pitched in to stop—"

"What's Mrs. Marsh got to do with it?"

"Why, she's the builder," Ward said. "Her husband used to be. Why, Sam Marsh was the greatest skyscraper builder going."

"Well, what do you know!" Jack said, amazed.

"Yeah," Chip chimed in. "Boy, it sure *is* a small world."

"What are you guys talking about?" Ward asked curiously. "Do you know her—Mrs. Marsh?"

"We should," Chip said.

"Sure," Jack explained. "She's a neighbor of ours. She lives on the same floor we do."

"Yeah. And she came to us about that poltergeist of hers."

"Oh, I read about that in the paper," Ward said. "All

kinds of mysterious noises.”

“And dishes flying and chairs moving,” Chip added.

“That’s how I happened to go up to your apartment,” Ward said.

“Oh, yeah?” Jack questioned.

“Sure,” Ward went on. “I heard Mrs. Marsh tell some guy that she was thinking of hiring Detective Wilson. I got the idea then of going to the detective to see if he’d—”

“Ward,” someone called.

“That’s my dad,” Ward said. “I’ll be back in a minute.” He rushed into the shadowy interior.

“We might as well walk over in that direction,” Jack said.

They picked their way over the littered floor.

“You know,” Chip said, “that big guy isn’t going to like it. I mean, how we’re hanging around Ward.”

“What if he doesn’t? We told him off, didn’t we?”

Chip stopped suddenly. He seemed to be listening to something.

“What gives?” Jack asked.

“You notice how quiet it is?”

Jack concentrated on listening.

"Oh, there's a little noise," Chip said. "There's no riveting, though. It just doesn't sound like a skyscraper being built. That's what I meant."

"Maybe it's because of the trouble Ward was talking about. You know, work not being done."

"Maybe. But if you ask me, it's weird."

Jack shook his head. "Not as weird as what I see up there. Look." He pointed upward.

Chip looked up. On a girder above them, a man walked quickly and confidently. The man's features were those of an American Indian. Sticking out of the band around his steel hat was a single red-tipped white feather.

"He's an Indian," Chip said in disbelief.

"And look at the way he walks on that beam. A mountain goat couldn't do any better. Say, there're more Indians. They don't have any feathers, though."

"This whole thing's getting spookier by the minute," Chip exclaimed. "Poltergeists. A tattooed man. And now Indians."

"How true," Jack said.

"Dad would be sore if he knew we were getting mixed up in—"

"He should have stayed here then," Jack retorted. "And we should have had our vacation. For crying out loud, Chip, wipe that grease off your face. It sure looks like you put it on."

"Well, I did."

"Yeah. And it looks terribly phony."

"On top of everything, now we're fighting about nothing."

"Not about nothing. About that grease on your face."

When Chip said that he was all for calling the whole thing off, Jack shook his head. "You're hopeless," Jack said. They waited in silence after that until Ward returned.

"What's this about Jedd and you?" Ward asked excitedly a few moments later.

"Is Jedd a real big guy," Jack asked, "with a tattoo on—"

"Yeah, yeah. That's him. He told Dad that he warned you to get going, that he doesn't want kids around here."

"To mind our own business is what he said."

"He did a good job of scaring us, too," Chip added.
"Trapping us in that little elevator—"

"Why didn't you tell me about all this?" Ward demanded.

"You were busy telling us about Mrs. Marsh. And then your father called you."

Ward advised the boys to do what Jedd said. "I don't want to be responsible for what might happen if you don't," he said.

Jack and Chip listened without comment.

"That Jedd is a gorilla." Ward's thin face seemed thinner, paler. "He could tear you apart."

"The interesting thing is why he should want to," Jack mused. "Jedd's mixed up in this. So this isn't the time to quit. Now we've got something to work on. Am I right, Chip?"

Chip swallowed hard. But he said, "Yeah. I guess so."

"For a starter," Jack said, "we can spy on Jedd."

"I hope it's a starter." Chip grimaced as if he were sick to his stomach. "It could be our finish, too, you know," he added slowly.

7

Following Jedd

"I have to go home," Ward said. "Dad just told me. Will you promise me, fellows, not to mess around with Jedd?"

"You've got my promise," Chip said. "You don't have to coax me."

Ward and Chip looked at Jack, waiting for a reaction from him.

"You know who I'd like to see?" Jack said finally. "I'd like to see Mrs. Marsh."

"What kind of an answer is that?" Chip said sharply. Ward agreed with Chip that Jack was being evasive. A tall, thin man in a plaid sport shirt went by.

"That's Lou Loftus," Ward whispered. "He's foreman of the fitting-up gangs. What a sour personality! Keeps getting sourer all the time. Dad's been having a lot of trouble with him."

"Great!" Chip said. "The more I'm around here, the less I want to be."

"Well, I have to go," Ward said. "Remember what I said: Keep away from Jedd."

As soon as Ward had gone, Jack said to Chip, "All I want to do is see Mrs. Marsh. I think we ought to tell her that Professor Jamison was in her apartment."

"Okay. Then we beat it. Right?"

"Of course. You act as if I want to stick around here and mess with all this."

That silenced Chip. They wandered around for a while, but they didn't see Mrs. Marsh anywhere.

An acetylene torch ahead of them sent out a shower of bright copper sparks. A smoky blue light illumined the workman, who was wearing a long mask that made him seem like a creature from outer space.

Jack grabbed Chip and pulled him quickly behind a steel column.

"That guy's just a welder," Chip complained. "That's a mask he's wearing. Don't tell me you thought—"

"Just be quiet, will you?" Jack hissed.

Ahead and to their left, in the dimness, they heard voices raised in anger.

"That's Loftus," Jack whispered. "He's the foreman Ward said was such a sourball."

"All they do around here is fight," Chip complained. "I'm glad we decided to get out of this skyscraper business while we're still in one piece."

"You see who's taking Loftus' part?"

"I can hardly see Loftus," Chip muttered.

"He's right up against the construction shack. Jedd is with him. He's so big you must be able to see him."

"Oh, now—now I do."

"We better get out of here," Jack whispered with urgency, "before he spots us. I don't feel like tangling with him just now."

After the boys returned home and had supper, they spent the rest of the evening waiting for a call from their father. It never came.

The next morning, during a long drawn-out break-

fast of cereal, eggs, chocolate milk, and coffee cake, they speculated when their father might call.

"Well, we just can't sit by the phone all the time," Jack said.

"It's supposed to be cooler today. Anyhow, that's what they said on the radio yesterday."

"Let's go out. That's one way to find out about the weather. And I think we ought to see Ward. You know, tell him we decided to pull out of this skyscraper deal."

"Why do we have to bother telling him? If we don't show up, he'll know that's what we decided."

Jack didn't agree with his brother. Then Chip suggested that they save making the trip to the skyscraper by phoning Ward. This would also avoid the danger of running into Jedd, he added. But when they looked up the name in the phone book, they found that there was almost a half page of McGraths. Since they didn't know Ward's father's first name, they had to give up the idea of telephoning.

"I still don't see why we have to tell Ward," Chip said. "You want to go to the skyscraper, don't you?"

"What are you talking about? Why should I want to go?"

"I can just tell you do."

After putting the dishes in the sink, the boys went downstairs and spoke to the doorman about the mail.

"We're in the apartment that Detective Wilson had," Jack told him. "Chip and Jack Power. I just want to make sure we get any mail that comes for us."

The doorman nodded.

"It'll probably be airmail special delivery. It's coming from California."

The doorman nodded again. This time he added, "Any mail like that I'll put under your door. You got nothing to worry about."

The temperature hadn't dropped, but the humidity was much lower. The boys found it was now quite comfortable outdoors. Their regular clothes were cooler, too, than the work clothes they had used as a disguise.

"No point in taking a subway," Jack said. "We might as well walk."

"You know something? I wouldn't mind seeing the Mets play."

"If we're going to a ball game, I'd rather wait for Dad to get back and go with him."

They ended up walking to Rockefeller Center.

"Don't gawk up at the buildings," Jack told Chip sharply. "You make us look like a couple of people from out of town."

"Well, do we live here?" Chip demanded.

In spite of what he had said, Jack, too, held his head far back. He soon spotted the steel framework of a skyscraper.

"What do you say we go over and take a look at that? You know, Chip, I'm kind of interested now in skyscrapers."

When they were half a block from the structure, the boys realized it was the Wyndott Building. They were just approaching it from a different direction than they had the day before.

"I bet you knew it all the time," Chip said.

"Honestly, I didn't." Jack's brow was furrowed by his seriousness. "But since we're here, we might as well tell Ward."

"I'm sure you had this all planned—taking the walk

and walking this way—everything.”

“I’m telling you, I didn’t.”

“Okay, so you didn’t.”

They looked all over the ground floor, but they failed to find Ward.

“How about taking the elevator,” Jack said, “and searching around the top floor?”

Before Chip could reply, a man stopped near the boys. “You looking for Ward McGrath?” he asked. Even before he introduced himself, the boys could see that the man was Ward’s father. He was slight and wiry, just like Ward. And he had the same thin face, dark eyes, and lank, black hair.

“Ward hasn’t showed up yet,” he said. “I saw you with him yesterday. He told me all about you. Would you like to see what we’re trying to do here?”

For someone with a deadline hanging over his head, Mr. McGrath took a lot of time with Jack and Chip. He told them that there were about seventy-five different building trades working on the skyscraper and that their work had to synchronize or there was trouble. He mentioned that all the earth excavated in getting

down to bedrock for the foundation had been dumped as fill along the shore of the Hudson River.

"We're going to the Empire State Building with our father," Chip said.

"I worked on it," Mr. McGrath said proudly. "It's the tallest in the world. All of a quarter of a mile, from the street to the top of that one."

The boys were impressed by Mr. McGrath. They thanked him for showing them the building. As they were leaving, they noticed Jedd walking up ahead of them.

It didn't take Chip long to realize that he and Jack were soon following Jedd down the street.

"What's the big idea?" Chip asked.

"He followed us once, didn't he?"

"That's not the reason we're following him—just because he followed us. We better slow down. We're getting too close to him."

"Well, wouldn't you like to help Mr. McGrath?" Jack demanded. "Especially now that we know him."

"Sure I would. I'm not complaining. Let's just not let ourselves get clobbered."

"Wait a minute." Jack grabbed Chip's arm. "He's stopped."

Chip didn't seem to have heard. "I don't like the way he kept calling you Red. He won't forget you. He'll be able to spot you a mile away."

Jedd had stopped to look in the window of an antique store. But it was obvious to the boys that he was watching the hotel across the street. After a time, he went into an outdoor telephone booth. He remained in the booth for a long time, holding the receiver in his hand. But he wasn't doing any talking. The all-glass booth made it a good place from which to watch the entrance of the hotel.

"I know!" Jack exclaimed, grabbing Chip's arm. "I'll bet that's the hotel Mrs. Marsh moved into. It makes sense, doesn't it, that she'd get a hotel that wasn't too far from the skyscraper?"

"So?" Chip said skeptically.

"Well, don't expect me to tell you exactly what he's got in mind. Maybe he's going to ambush her. I don't know."

"Can I ask one question, without you jumping on

me? One question is all I want."

"I know what you're going to say. Why would he want to hurt her? I'm not saying this is the reason. But it would be to his advantage if something happened to her. That would be something else to slow up construction on the—"

Jack broke off. His eyes grew wide. He looked frightened.

"What's the matter?" Chip asked.

"We have to warn her!"

Chip started toward the hotel entrance, but Jack quickly grabbed him. "Hey, you want to ruin everything," Jack said sharply, "by letting him see you? We'll phone her. That's all we've got to do—phone her."

They went into a drugstore on the same block. But the three telephone booths were occupied.

"You go outside," Jack told Chip, "just to make sure Jedd doesn't get her if she comes out. Go on. I'll wait here until I can get one of these phones."

Chip left. Jack moved restlessly in front of the booths. It seemed that the people in them would never finish.

Before any of the phone booths were empty, Chip

dashed quickly into the drugstore.

"He was gone when I got there," Chip exclaimed breathlessly. "I didn't know what else to do but come back here."

Jack groaned. "You know what this means? Mrs. Marsh must have come out in the short while that we were gone."

"And you think Jedd nabbed her?"

"Of course. What else?"

8

Trouble at the Skyscraper

Outside the drugstore, the boys stood undecided as to their next move.

"You know something?" Jack said. "We're a couple of kooks."

"You could be right about that."

"I'm not kidding, Chip. In all the excitement all we could think of was one thing—that Mrs. Marsh came out of the hotel and Jedd got her. Now just a second, Chip, let me finish. You know it's possible that Mrs. Marsh didn't come out and that Jedd just got tired of waiting and left."

Chip shrugged. "Could be," he said. "Or Jedd might

have gone in the hotel after her.”

“Sure. There’s no end to the possibilities. All kinds of things might have happened.”

Suddenly the light of inspiration came to Jack’s eyes. He turned around quickly and went back into the drug-store. When Chip followed, asking Jack what he had in mind, Jack kept going as if he hadn’t heard.

All three phone booths were empty now. Jack entered the first one.

“Hey!” Chip called out when the door of the booth was closed right in his face.

Chip looked into the booth through the glass door. Hearing anything was impossible because Jack had his back to the door. To Chip’s surprise, Jack soon came out of the phone booth.

“You know what I said about our being kooks? Well, Chip, I just proved it.”

“The way you shut the door in my face proved *you* were one,” Chip muttered.

“I just called the hotel Jedd was watching,” Jack continued.

“And why couldn’t I hear what you had to say to

them?" Chip demanded hotly.

"You know what I found out? Mrs. Marsh isn't even registered there."

"Wow!" Chip forgot that Jack had annoyed him. "We are kooks. I mean, to have taken it for granted that that was her hotel."

Jack folded his arms and shook his red head in disgust. "We're all wet about Jedd, too. We obviously guessed wrong as to why he was watching the hotel."

"I wonder why he was watching it."

"You've got me," Jack said. "But it must have been for some sinister reason."

The boys started walking west toward Lexington Avenue, although they hadn't decided where they were going.

"I wonder why we haven't heard from Dad," Jack said, breaking a long silence.

"Seems like he might have telephoned when he arrived in California."

"Let's go home," Chip suggested. "There could be some mail waiting for us."

Before Jack realized what Chip was doing, Chip

stepped out into the street and flagged down a speeding cab.

With a squeal of brakes, the cab came to a stop a little ahead of them.

"What's the big idea?" Jack growled at Chip as they jogged toward the waiting cab. "We could have taken a bus."

"This is a lot faster. I want to see that mail from Dad."

As they got into the cab Jack reminded Chip that their money was limited and that it would have to last until their father returned from the Coast.

The cabbie drove as if he were being chased.

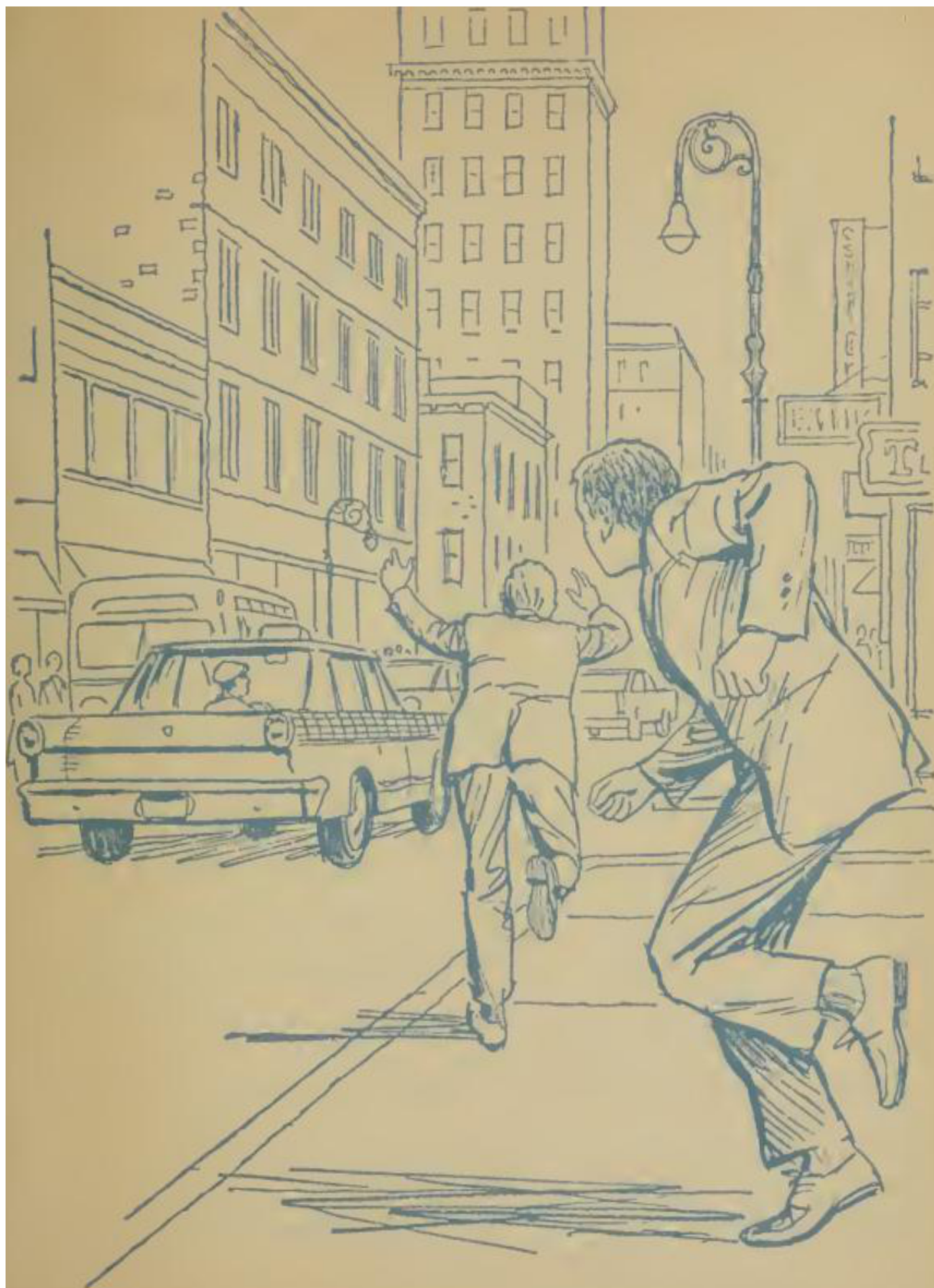
Once during the ride Chip exclaimed, "What did I tell you? This is the way to make time."

But after all the rush, the boys were disappointed to find their mailbox empty.

"Remember what the doorman said," Chip reminded Jack.

"I remember," Jack said, disgruntled because he was worried.

But when they opened the door to their apartment,



they found no mail there, either. Jack even picked up a scatter rug in the foyer, thinking that a letter might have slipped under it.

"I'm beginning to get worried," Jack said.

"Don't forget, Dad might have called while we were out."

"Well, we're sticking around from now on," Jack declared. "So if he calls again, we'll be here."

Chip watched TV most of the afternoon and finished off a bag of potato chips as long as his arm. Jack stayed in a bedroom—where, he said, at least it was quiet.

Jack read first in an upholstered chair with his legs slung over the armrest. Next, he stretched out in bed—intending to read more, but he dozed off.

Chip charging into the room awakened him.

"Come here! Quick!" Chip yelled and immediately ran out of the room.

When Jack reached the living room, Chip was at the TV set. "Pictures of the fire in Griffith Park," Chip explained, pointing at the screen. "It's on the news."

Firemen were shown working desperately to check the advancing flames.

"There's a guy with a camera!" Jack exclaimed excitedly. "See him?"

"Yeah. Yeah. But it's not Dad!"

They both searched the screen, hoping to spot their father. But the scene soon shifted to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and a news account of a derailed train.

The following morning, Jack and Chip were again waiting for a letter from their father. They knew it might arrive anytime because he would most likely send it airmail special delivery.

Chip turned on the TV set. "Another news program," he said, "might have stuff about the fire. And Dad might just happen to be in their shots."

"Anything's possible," Jack said.

A hammering on the door sent both Jack and Chip racing to answer it.

"This is it!" Chip said, overjoyed.

They were sure their father's letter was being delivered. So they were both very surprised to find Mrs. Marsh standing before them when they opened the door.

"Oh, my dear young men," she said as she came into

the apartment, "I'm in a state of shock." She was still wearing a black dress and the double strand of pearls. Her heavily veined hands were tightly clasped in front of her. "Shock is the only word to describe it."

"That big guy, Mrs. Marsh," Chip said. "Did he do something—"

"Your father isn't here?" Mrs. Marsh asked, looking around.

"As far as we know he's still out on the West Coast," Jack told her. "We haven't heard from him yet."

"Do you mind if I sit down?" Mrs. Marsh said as she lowered herself into a chair.

"How about a glass of water or something?" Chip asked.

"No, no, no," Mrs. Marsh said. Her hands were unclasped now, and one of them was worrying the pearls at her throat. "I just want to catch my breath."

Mrs. Marsh closed her eyes wearily. The boys stood in front of her, watching her with concern. Her face was pale. She seemed even older than when they had seen her before.

"That poltergeist," she moaned, her eyes still closed.

The boys waited for her to continue, but she didn't.

"Mrs. Marsh," Jack said. "Are you all right?"

Mrs. Marsh opened her eyes slowly.

"What about the poltergeist?" Chip wanted to know.

"Don't rush her," Jack whispered to Chip.

"It's all right, young men," Mrs. Marsh said. "I'm perfectly all right. It's just the shock."

"The shock of what?" Chip persisted, in spite of the way Jack glared at him.

"I'm reasonably happy in my hotel," Mrs. Marsh said, "even though my suite has turned out to be far from ideal. Your father said that if I moved, I'd leave the poltergeist behind. And I thought I had."

"You mean it's doing stuff at your hotel now?" Jack asked, unable to hold back the question.

Mrs. Marsh shook her head, her eyes closed. "No," she said, opening her eyes. "It is now being mischievous at my skyscraper. It's taking my skyscraper apart."

"No kidding?" Chip said.

Jack exclaimed in amazement, "Taking it apart!"

"Yes," Mrs. Marsh said. "I know it sounds incredible. But it's the truth, the absolute truth."

9

Attempt at Disguise

"I don't understand," Jack said. "Skyscrapers are riveted together. So how could—"

Jack stopped. Mrs. Marsh was shaking her head. "The steel frame is bolted together," she said.

"You mean it's not riveted?"

"It's all held together, my young man, by high tensile-strength steel bolts. Skyscrapers are built that way now. Many of them are. And those bolts are being taken out of my skyscraper. It's being disassembled like a toy, like one of those Erector toys. You realize what that means?"

"Sure," Jack said. "This will make it impossible for

you to meet your schedule.”

Mrs. Marsh arose slowly and a little unsteadily. The boys stood around her, afraid she might fall. She smiled, but it was a weak, sad smile. She explained how much this skyscraper meant to her. She was trying to honor her late husband by keeping alive the Marsh reputation in skyscraper construction. Her husband had been the country's leading contractor and skyscraper specialist. If this building failed—which was the first one going up since she had become the head of the Sam D. Marsh Company—she would not only have failed in her purpose, but would be finished as a contractor.

“You really think a poltergeist is doing this?” Chip asked, echoing his earlier skepticism.

“There was something else, too,” Mrs. Marsh said, ignoring Chip's question. “Many of the marks painted on the steel members have been crossed out. They indicate where girders and beams and so forth are to go. This means more delay. More confusion. No, young man, I don't think *this* is the work of poltergeists.”

Jack and Chip stood looking at her, waiting for her to go on.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I certainly appreciate your letting me unburden myself." She sat down and shook her head as though to deny all that was happening. "This is a very competitive business, you know. Have you ever heard of Selwyn Bancroft? No, of course, you wouldn't have heard of him. Bancroft's a building contractor. I'm his biggest competitor. And that man is all ego. The idea that he has to compete with an old woman like me must have strained that ego of his—to the breaking point."

"So it's not a poltergeist who is taking your skyscraper apart," Chip said. "It's this Bancroft."

"You think," Jack said, "this is his way of trying to put you out of business?"

"Oh, I'm sure of it. He must have read the newspaper stories about the poltergeist in my apartment. So—and I wouldn't put it past that man and his ego—he thinks he can do his dirty work and have it all blamed on the poltergeist." Mrs. Marsh rose hurriedly. "Oh, I must go. As I get older, I seem to be getting more talkative. You will excuse a garrulous but frightened old woman, won't you?"

The boys walked with her to the door. Chip started to tell her about Jedd, but Jack interrupted to tell her how they had let Professor Jamison into her apartment. He made it sound as if this was what Chip had been about to tell her.

"I've been thinking, Mrs. Marsh," Chip said. Jack motioned to him to be quiet, but Chip went right on. "Why don't you station a lot of guards around the skyscraper? That would make it hard for Bancroft to pull any more funny stuff."

"I've thought of that, too." Mrs. Marsh nodded. "Oh, yes. But police, private detectives, anything like that, I'm sure would get in the papers. You realize how silly that would make me look. I'd be a laughingstock. The idea of a haunted skyscraper would be terrible publicity. No one would want to rent space in the building after it was completed."

As she opened the door to leave the apartment, the boys noticed a telegraph boy walking down the hall toward them.

"That wire must be from Dad!" Chip said excitedly. Mrs. Marsh left, excusing herself again for having

talked at such length to the boys.

Jack was in such a hurry to open the telegram that his fingers fumbled with the envelope. Chip's breathing down his neck didn't help.

" 'Worried,' " Jack read. " 'Haven't been able to reach you.' "

"So Dad did try. . . ."

" 'Will call again,' " Jack continued reading.
" 'Nine PM your time.' "

"That's great," Chip said. "Well, we know Dad's okay. The thing is, he doesn't know if we are."

"We've got to be here at nine tonight. If he calls again and still doesn't get us—"

"Say," Chip interrupted, "maybe he can tell us when he's going to be back."

Jack nodded, but his thoughts were elsewhere. Finally he said, "I didn't want you telling Mrs. Marsh about the run-in we had with Jedd."

"Yeah. I figured as much."

"You remember how she sent her grandson home—afraid he might get hurt. Besides, it would be best to work on this undercover. We've got to be extremely

careful. Mrs. Marsh is in a real jam. This is her whole life at stake. And how about Ward's father?"

"Okay, okay," Chip said. "So what are we going to do? Are you planning to go back to the skyscraper and get booted off the top by Jedd? Even if it's being taken apart, it's still high enough—"

"Just a minute," Jack interrupted. "Hold it! I thought of something."

"What?"

"I've got a wild hunch," Jack said as he walked over to the telephone. "I just want to check it out."

He leafed quickly through the phone book. Then he ran his finger down a page. He stared at the place where his finger had stopped. Then he let out a howl and rushed over to Chip. "Just look at this! Right here! Right here!"

"I can't see through your finger." Chip grabbed the phone book. "What do you know! 'Bancroft, Selwyn,' " Chip read. "'Martinique Hotel.' I guess it's the same Martinique that Jedd was watching."

"There's the address. It's the same one. East Fifty-seventh. It's got to be that hotel."

"But I don't understand," Chip said. "Why was Jedd watching the hotel? Is he in cahoots with Bancroft against Mrs. Marsh, or isn't he? What was that wild hunch you said—"

"Oh, I figured there might be some tie-in between them—between Bancroft and Jedd. I mean, since they're both working against Mrs. Marsh. And I just had a feeling that Bancroft would be living in the Martinique."

"That's neat," Chip said. "The way you figured it. Come to think of it, though, what's the good of knowing where Bancroft lives?"

"Jedd's on to us, isn't he?" Jack was growing impatient. "We can't spy on him. But Bancroft doesn't know us. He's never seen us. So. . . ."

Jack didn't finish. He left it up to Chip to draw his own conclusion.

"Hey, that's a cool idea," Chip said finally. "That's really great."

Jack grinned. "It took you long enough to catch on. Frankly, I was afraid you were never going to."

They took a Fifth Avenue bus downtown. It was hot

and humid again. They felt it, too, as they walked east on Fifty-seventh to the Martinique.

For the tenth time Chip asked, "What are we going to do now? Just stand and watch the hotel the way Jedd did?"

This time Jack wasn't evasive. "The first thing we've got to do," he replied, "is go in and get a look at the guy. How are we ever going to spy on him if we don't know what he looks like?"

"I have a wild hunch now," Chip said. "It's not as wild as yours. We're going to get clobbered."

"Let's go in. It'll be cool in there, anyhow."

In a moment they stood uncertainly in the hotel lobby.

"I just thought of something," Jack said.

"So did I. Let's get out of here."

"It might be necessary for me to have a bellhop's coat."

"A bellhop's coat? Are you serious?"

Jack walked away from Chip without answering. He crossed the lobby to the dining-room entrance. He paused for a moment near a cart which contained

some ice-water pitchers. Then he went to a row of housephones nearby.

Chip had been standing on the other side of the lobby, watching his brother. But when Jack went to the housephones, Chip hurried over to him.

As Chip reached Jack he heard him say, "Oh, I'm sorry. I must have the wrong room."

"Was that Bancroft?" Chip asked as soon as Jack hung up.

"It sure was. Now we know he's in. And I got his room number from the desk clerk. Number twelve-fourteen."

Jack walked over to the dining-room entrance. He took one of the pitchers of ice water and headed for the elevator. Twice Chip said, "I hope you know what you're doing."

Jack and Chip stood in the back of the elevator on the way up. "When I go up to room twelve-fourteen and knock," Jack whispered, "you come strolling by. Get a good look at Bancroft. We want to be able to recognize him."

Chip stopped as soon as they left the elevator. "You

won't get away with this. Bancroft will know you're not a bellhop."

"I'll take my coat off. I'll act like I belong here. Don't worry about—"

"You know what happened the last time we put on a disguise. We ran head on into Jedd."

"Stop worrying, will you, and come on. All I have to do is knock on the door and hand Bancroft the pitcher of ice water. What can happen?"

"That's just it," Chip answered as he moved reluctantly down the corridor with Jack. "I don't know what's going to happen."

10

A Narrow Escape

Before they found room twelve-fourteen, Jack removed his coat and handed it to Chip.

"Remember, Chip," Jack said, "the idea is to get as good a look at Bancroft as we can." They started down the corridor. "If we're going to trail him, we have to be able to recognize him easily. We want to be able to pick him out of a crowd."

"You'll get a better look at him than I will," Chip said. "You're going to be handing him that pitcher."

"Oh, sure; I'll get a closeup view. What I want you to do is notice his height and weight, stuff like that. Trailing somebody is a science. Here's twelve-twelve.

The next door must be Bancroft's."

Chip stopped. He watched as Jack continued on to room twelve-fourteen. Just before Jack knocked, he waved for Chip to start walking. The idea was for Chip to pass while Bancroft stood in the open doorway.

Chip started slowly down the corridor. He was close enough to hear the voice on the other side of the door when it asked, "Who is it?"

"Ice water," Jack said.

"Don't want any!"

Chip stopped. Bending forward, he whispered, "Jack! Let's go!"

"Didn't you order ice water, sir?" Jack persisted, still facing the door.

The voice didn't answer this time.

Chip hurried forward. He slung Jack's coat over his shoulder so that he would have both hands free to grab his brother.

The door to twelve-fourteen burst open. And before Chip had a chance to grab Jack, the man in the doorway did.

Chip forgot all about observing Bancroft's height and weight. He noticed only that the water was sloshing out of the pitcher.

"Who are you?" Bancroft demanded. "Service isn't that good in the Martinique that they'd bring you ice water without your asking for it!"

"I'm sorry, sir. I was told—"

"First a telephone call. Something not right about it. And now this. Come on in!" Bancroft grasped Jack's arm. "I want to call the office."

"It's just a mistake, sir," Jack protested.

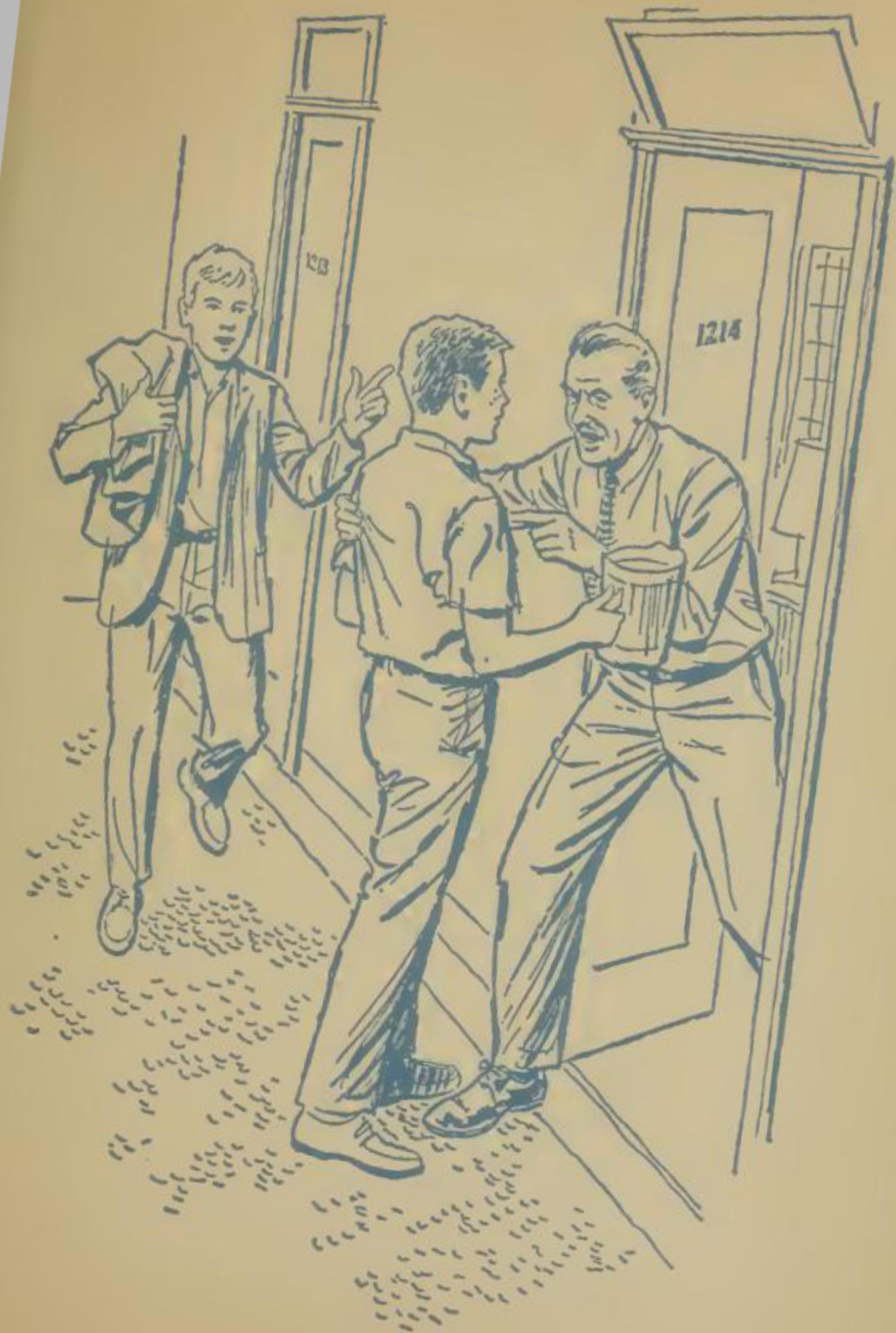
"I'll have someone come up—"

"That's—that's all it is, a mistake. You don't have to call the office. I'll go there myself."

Suddenly Chip had an idea. Taking a step forward, he called out loudly, "That ice water's for us. You sure did make a mistake. We're in twelve-twelve. My father's waiting for that ice water."

Reluctantly Bancroft let go of Jack. His eyes continued to glare. He was breathing very fast.

"You better hurry, too," Chip told Jack. "My dad's awfully thirsty and he's sore because—"



"I'm sorry, sir, for the mistake," Jack said to Bancroft as he moved sidewise and backward away from the door.

Room twelve-twelve was about twenty feet down the corridor. Jack and Chip stopped at the door. They couldn't help looking back. Bancroft was just where they had left him. He stood watching them suspiciously.

"What are we going to do?" Chip whispered to Jack.

"Take out some keys from your pocket. Act like you're opening the door."

"I don't have any keys."

"Act like you have, dope. We've got to stall until Bancroft goes back into his room."

Chip went through the motions of unlocking the door, mumbling all the while that everything was Jack's fault.

"Is he still watching?" Chip asked.

"He hasn't budged. Try the door."

"What do you mean?"

"If it's open, we'll go in."

"Walk in there? Into somebody's room?"

Jack tried the door. When he realized that it was

locked, he began ringing the bell.

"What are we going to say when somebody comes?"

Chip whispered.

"Take it easy, will you?"

No one answered. Jack rang the bell again. Still no one answered.

"By now, Bancroft knows you don't live here," Jack muttered. "He must have figured that out. I'll put the pitcher down. Then, we'll run for it."

As Jack put the pitcher on the floor, he noticed that Bancroft was no longer in front of his door. "Hold it!" Jack called to Chip, who was already striding down the hall. When he caught up with Chip, Jack laughed. "I wonder when Bancroft shut the door," he said. "How much of that show do you think we put on without an audience?"

"Say!" Chip's eyes were wide. "Maybe he's calling a house detective. If I lived there like I said, I should have been able to open that door."

Chip was jittery until he and his brother stepped onto the sidewalk in front of the hotel. Then he gave a big sigh of relief.

Jack stopped. "Well, we accomplished what we set out to do," he said. "When we see Bancroft now, we'll recognize—"

"Yeah. We'll recognize him and he'll recognize us. Keep walking, keep walking."

"How about going across the street to that antique store where Jedd was yesterday? That's as good a place as any to watch for Bancroft."

Chip was against it. After what had just happened, spying on Bancroft wasn't any safer than spying on Jedd, he declared.

"All right," Jack said, "then we won't—if you're going to feel that way about it."

They stopped in the drugstore across the street and had a Coke. As they were leaving, Jack placed his hand on Chip's arm warningly.

"You see who's over at the cigarette counter?" Jack asked.

Chip looked. "You mean the tall guy? Who is he?"

"He is what's known as distinguished looking," Jack replied. "He probably won't recognize me. I mean now that I've got my coat on and haven't got a water pitcher."

"Say, it's Bancroft. He looks different when he's not yelling."

Jack stood up, but Chip stayed on his stool. "What do you say we follow him?" Jack said. "Come on. We don't have to get too close to him. Just close enough so we don't lose him."

"How about your hair? He'll spot you just like that and—"

"So we'll live dangerously. You make it sound as if I'm the only redhead in existence."

They waited in the entranceway of the drugstore to give Bancroft a head start. The sidewalk wasn't crowded, so it wasn't difficult to keep him in sight.

"Look across the street," Chip said suddenly, grabbing Jack's arm. "Jedd! It's Jedd!"

"He must be following Bancroft. He's just keeping on the other side of the street."

That wasn't Jedd's intention, however, for just then he jaywalked across the street. He moved on a long diagonal, heading for a spot about a half block behind Bancroft.

Jack and Chip started up the street.

"We've got to be careful," Jack said. "This is real cloak and dagger stuff. It's too good to miss."

There were two cabs in front of the Martinique. They saw Bancroft cross the street and open the door of one of the cabs, the door on the street side. At the same time, Jedd was hurrying across the street at a dogtrot.

"He'll get in that other cab and follow Bancroft," Jack said.

Now the boys couldn't think about the possibility of their being seen. They hurried. They were directly opposite the cabs when they saw Jedd barge into the same cab which Bancroft had entered.

"Did you see that!" Jack exclaimed.

"Come on!" Chip was caught up in the mystery spirit now. "Let's get the other cab and follow them!"

"Hey, Chip! Now, wait a second. . . ."

But in spite of his uncertainty, when Chip raced across the street Jack ran, too.

"Follow that cab!" Chip told the driver as he opened the back door.

The cabbie had a round, fat face. His lips were com-

pressed so that his cheeks stuck out like a cherub's. He shook his head. "Nothing doing, Mac," he said. He didn't sound at all like a cherub. "A cop commandeers me. Okay. I go. But you're no cop, Mac. You want me to take you someplace, I'll take you there like any other fare. But I ain't playing 'follow the leader' with no cab."

"I'll give you a dollar extra," Chip said quickly, breathlessly.

The cabbie started the motor as he yelled, "Get in! Get in, Mac, get in!"

11

Scratching at the Door

The cab shot forward before the back door had been shut. Jack had to use both hands to slam the door—and even then it wasn't easy.

At the intersection the first cab went through a yellow light. The second cab couldn't make it, however. The boys had to wait.

Jack and Chip sat on the edge of the back seat.

The cabbie growled at the light, "Change! Come on! You have to be red now? You can't be red some other time?"

By the time they reached the next light, they had almost caught up with the cab. Only a convertible

remained between them. But when the light changed, the convertible didn't move. The cabbie leaned on his horn. But it wasn't just a case of a driver not noticing that a light had changed. The convertible had stalled.

By the time the cabbie had made it around the convertible and raced down the three-lane, one-way street, a swarm of cabs were waiting at the light.

The cabbie opened the door and jumped out on the pavement to view the situation. He ducked back in right away. "There must be fifty cabs out there," he reported. His round face looked as if it were in terrible pain. "All of them look like the one we've been breaking our necks to catch. You know, yellow-green top. This ain't my line, Mac, following cabs. I told you. You remember?"

"I'll give you that dollar I promised you," Chip said.

"What am I, a highway robber?"

"Well, I promised—"

"Mac, listen to me. Did I follow the cab to its destination? No, I did not. So? Why should you pay me what is not coming to me?"

Chip didn't have a chance to argue further, because

Jack paid the cabbie and they left the cab before the light changed.

"I spotted a subway entrance while you were talking," Jack said. "Dad'll probably call right on the dot. If we don't make it in half an hour we're sunk."

They hadn't been on the subway very long when Jack said in a puzzled tone, "We're going uptown. But does it seem familiar to you? It doesn't to me."

"You mean we're on the wrong subway?"

Jack gestured in despair. "If we don't answer when Dad calls, what's he going to think?"

"The worst, naturally."

They untangled the subway mix-up. Instead of an east-side subway, they had taken a west-side one. To make up time, they caught a cab. It was immediately stopped by the heavy crosstown traffic.

They left the cab in disgust and hurried toward their apartment at a dogtrot.

The crosstown blocks were long.

"We're still making better time than that cab," Jack said, looking at his watch. "It hasn't caught up with us yet?"

"How long have we got?"

"Dad might not call exactly at nine. He might call earlier."

"How much before nine is it? That's what I want to know."

"Ten minutes to go, by my watch."

Chip immediately slowed to a walk.

"What's the matter with you?" Jack demanded as he, too, slowed to a walk.

"Why kill yourself running? We'll never make it."

It was twenty-two after nine, according to the clock in their apartment, when Jack and Chip dashed through the door. They were perspiring from all the running they had done, and so the cool air of the air-conditioned apartment felt very cold.

They dropped into chairs. They looked as if they were mimicking each other, for the arms of both boys hung limp and their tired legs were sprawled out in front of them.

"What gets me," Chip said, "is that all the hurrying was for nothing."

"I'm just wondering what Dad thinks." Jack

straightened up a little and shook his head. "If he gets panicky, he's liable to contact the New York police."

"And the Marines—and the Coast Guard, probably."

Jack stood up. "You know what I just thought?" he said. "Dad will surely try to contact us again. He's not going to do anything wild, right off. He'll probably tell the operator to try every half hour or so."

"I hope that's what he does." Chip stood up, too. As he walked into the kitchen he asked, "What do you think gives with Jedd and Bancroft?"

"I don't know." Jack followed Chip. "Are you hungry? We haven't had any supper, you know, and it's almost half past nine."

Jack scrambled half a dozen eggs and sliced a can of small, boiled potatoes into a skillet. The boys tried to wait until the potatoes were fried, but the scrambled eggs were gone by the time the potatoes were done.

While they were cleaning up the dishes, the phone rang. Both Jack and Chip raced for it. They made it to the phone together and both of them grabbed the receiver. Jack jerked it away.

After saying hello, Jack said, "Yes, you've got the

right number, but Detective Wilson is in Europe. . . .”

They waited and waited for the phone to ring again. Finally they wandered off to bed.

They lay in the quiet darkness for a long time, each knowing that the other wasn't asleep.

“After all that racing around,” Chip said, “how come we're not falling asleep?”

“You know what I just realized?”

“What?”

“The reason why it was so quiet at the skyscraper. No riveting was going on, that's why. They were using those bolts that Mrs. Marsh told us about.”

“Jack, what were those Indians doing there?”

“They were working. Don't tell me you haven't heard that Indians are great for that kind of work!”

“So what if I haven't heard?” Chip snapped. “I never said I knew everything.”

Jack didn't answer. There was a long silence, as if he were trying to think of something to say.

Finally he said, “I don't know about you, but I'm going to sleep.” The only sound was Chip's regular breathing. “But you've beat me to it,” Jack mumbled.

No sooner had Jack fallen asleep than he awakened with a start. He sat up. His first thought was that it had been the telephone which had awakened him.

Then he heard a sound at the door. It was the scratching sound made by a key being inserted into a lock. But that key didn't fit. Wide awake now and tense, Jack heard another key being tried in the lock.

Jack shook Chip. When he awakened, Jack placed his hand over Chip's mouth. "Be quiet," he warned Chip. "Somebody's at the door . . . trying to get in!"

12

A Call From California

As soon as Jack took his hand away, Chip whispered, "Jedd? You think it's Jedd?"

"He tried a few keys. It couldn't be somebody who got off on the wrong floor and tried our door by mistake."

Chip got out of bed quickly and quietly. His white pajamas were dimly visible in the darkness. Jack just as quietly got out of the other side of the bed. He raced around the foot to intercept Chip.

"You want to get yourself killed?" he hissed as he grabbed Chip. "This is New York. You just can't open a front door in the middle of the night. You can't tell

who in the world might be out there."

"Be quiet, will you!" Chip twisted to free himself. "You'll scare him away!"

"I'm not letting you go! You're not opening that door!"

Chip dropped suddenly, breaking Jack's grip. He scooted through the darkness of the living room. But before he reached the door, the telephone rang.

In the silence and darkness, the ringing phone seemed like an exploding bomb. It was so unexpected and startling that it stopped the boys dead in their tracks.

"That probably scared him off," Chip whispered, edging toward the door.

"Don't go! This must be Dad calling!"

"But I want to get a look at who that was!"

"Now, wait a second, Chip. If this isn't Dad, I promise I'll go with you. This could be just another call for Wilson."

Chip switched on a floor lamp, and Jack rushed to the phone.

"By now," Chip grumbled, "the guy could have made it to Brooklyn."

The instant Jack exclaimed, "Dad!" Chip ran for the door and hurried out.

Mr. Power apologized to Jack for not calling at the time he specified in his wire.

"How is everything?" Mr. Power asked eagerly.

"Great! Just great!"

"The apartment's working out all right, I take it. Now listen, Jack, I'll be sending you more money."

"That's okay. I still have some."

"You'll need more, Jack. I've got another assignment out here. I don't know just how long it will take. That's why I was late in calling you. I was seeing someone about it."

"How long do you think it will take, Dad? We were figuring on your coming back soon."

"I'm anxious to get back. I'll make it as soon as I can. Before you hang up, Jack, let me say hello to Chip."

Jack looked around the room wildly. His eyes settled on the open door. Suddenly he realized what had happened. He stared hard. He could hardly tell his father that Chip wasn't around because he was chasing somebody who had tried to break into the apartment. "Chip's

—he may be asleep,” Jack gasped finally.

“Well, wake him up! Jack, there’s nothing wrong, is there?”

“No, Dad. No. It’s just that you’re calling all the way from California.”

“Listen. All I want to do, Jack, is to say hello to him.”

“I know, Dad. But it’s costing you dough, waiting for Chip.”

“Just go wake him. Let me worry about the phone bill.”

Jack said, “Okay, Dad.”

He put the phone down and ran to the door. The corridor was empty. Jack stood in the open doorway, undecided about what to do. He didn’t have time to look for Chip. His father was beginning to wonder what was going on. He couldn’t possibly tell him that Chip was sleeping so soundly that he couldn’t awaken him.

Suddenly the elevator door far down the corridor opened. Chip, dressed in pajamas, stepped out of it. Jack put a cupped hand to his mouth like a megaphone and hissed, “Hurry!” Then he rushed back to the phone



and told his father that Chip would be there in a minute.

Jack hurried from the phone and caught Chip as he came through the door, warning him not to say anything about what had happened while their father had been away.

Chip was on the phone for a very short time.

"What did he tell you?" Jack demanded.

"The first thing he wanted to know was why I was out of breath. And he said that I didn't sound as if I had been asleep."

"He must have said something more important than that," Jack insisted. "He was talking clear across the country."

"He's worried we're bored. He thinks we've got nothing exciting to do. I sure felt like telling him how I'd just gone to the first floor in my pajamas after—Hey, what's this about Dad's not coming back? He said you'd tell me."

Jack did. And on their way back to bed, they talked about who might have been at the door.

"It couldn't ~~have~~ been the poltergeist," Chip declared. "I just don't believe in that kind of stuff."

"I've a feeling it was Jedd. Bancroft might very well have told him how we'd come to his hotel room—"

"You think Jedd came to scare us?"

"Isn't that the way he operates? Remember that fast elevator ride?"

After they had been in bed for a while, Chip said, "Jack? I just thought of something."

"I did, too," Jack answered. "I was thinking how foolish it was for you to chase that guy, whoever he was."

"What if he comes back?" Chip demanded. "That's what I've been wondering."

"Go to sleep, will you?"

"Maybe we ought to put something in front of the door. Then if he does get in, he'll stumble and make a racket which will wake us up."

"Go ahead, if you want to." Jack flopped around in bed restlessly. "I'm going to sleep."

"The guy could come back, you know," Chip persisted.

Jack didn't answer.

"Okay. If you're going to sleep, I am, too. Why should I do all the worrying?"

13

“Trouble, Trouble, Trouble”

Sunlight filled the bedroom.

Jack stood leaning over the bed. “Hey, Chip!” Jack shouted, shaking his brother. “Wake up! Chip!”

Suddenly, Chip awoke. He jumped up, startled, looking around in a daze. “Where . . .” he mumbled incoherently. “Wha’—wha’ is it?”

Jack grasped Chip’s shoulders. “Take it easy,” he said. “I just got an idea,” he explained. “And I wanted to—”

“An idea?” Chip asked, as if not believing his ears.

“Yeah—an idea,” Jack snapped.

“And you had to wake me up for that?”

"It's not early. It must be—"

"You scared me," Chip accused. "I thought it was Jedd—or whoever it was who tried to break in here last night."

"It's almost nine o'clock. I didn't mean to scare you."

"Okay," Chip said. He fell back onto the pillow.

"Don't go back to sleep," Jack pleaded. He yanked at the sheet, but Chip grabbed and held onto it. "I don't know about you, but I'm going to have some breakfast. I want to go out to Mrs. Marsh's skyscraper."

Chip didn't say anything. It wasn't until Jack had gone to the kitchen that he got out of bed. He stood in the kitchen doorway as Jack took milk out of the refrigerator.

"Was that why you woke me up?" Chip asked. "You wanted to tell me—"

"My idea. Yeah." Jack carried the milk over to the kitchen table. "What do you think about our getting a job working for Mrs. Marsh?"

"A job? You mean on the skyscraper?"

"That way we could spot whoever is taking apart the skyscraper. It would be a real undercover deal."

"Say, that's neat. That's real cool."

Jack shrugged. "I'm not saying my idea's that good. Jedd could still hop on us, even if we were officially working around the place." Jack placed a battery of cereal boxes on the table. "I don't know about you, but I'm eating."

Jack was almost through with his breakfast by the time Chip had dressed and come to the table.

"I can't figure out why we haven't told Mrs. Marsh about Jedd and Bancroft," Chip mused. "You know that they're pals or something."

"Why do you think I didn't want you to tell Dad? For the same reason."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Of course. Dad and Mrs. Marsh would react in the same way if you told them something like that. They would both be afraid we'd get hurt."

Chip poured cereal into his bowl. "They might just happen to be right about that," he reflected.

Jack left the kitchen. Chip was deep in thought as he ate his cereal.

Suddenly he started eating very fast. "Jack!" he called

out when he had finished. He raced into the living room. "*You* had an idea. Listen to the one I've—" He broke off, noticing that Jack wasn't in the living room. "Jack—Jack, where are you!"

"What do you want?" Jack yelled from the foyer, without turning from his examination of the lock on the front door.

Chip walked into the foyer, saying, "I've got an idea." Then he said, "Hey, what are you doing?"

"That fellow might have tried to pick the lock last night."

"Didn't you say you heard him trying different keys?"

"He could still have tried to pick the lock, couldn't he? I would have to take the lock apart to find out. The tumblers are usually scratched when a lock is picked. And sometimes you can find metal filings, which is a giveaway."

"You want to hear my idea?" Chip demanded. "Instead of taking that lock apart, how about writing to Mrs. Marsh? We could tell her about Bancroft and Jedd. We wouldn't have to sign the letter. That way she

wouldn't worry that we were mixed up in the whole thing."

"I'm not going to bother with the lock now," Jack said, walking back into the living room with Chip.

"I just think we ought to let Mrs. Marsh know what's going on," Chip insisted.

"That's just it, Chip. We don't know what's going on. Not really."

"We could tell her what we do know."

Jack shook his head. "There would be no point to it. I want to get a hold of something definite. You ready? Let's get going."

They caught a Fifth Avenue bus and then walked east. Soon they could see the skyscraper. They gazed up at the steel framework as they walked in its direction.

"Wonder if it's still being taken apart," Jack mused.

"It seems higher to me."

"Maybe they're putting back the girders faster than they're being unbolted."

Chip stopped suddenly. "Look!" he cried, pointing up to the top of the skyscraper. "Is that guy all right?"

In the southwest corner of the structure, where the

columns for a new story had been erected and joined by beams, a figure dangled in midair from one of the beams.

Jack didn't take time to answer Chip. He began to sprint for the skyscraper. Chip raced to keep up with him. They dodged pedestrians, wove in and out of traffic at the cross streets. Jack spotted a policeman just before they reached the skyscraper. They slowed, but only long enough to point up and gasp that he call an ambulance or an emergency squad.

They didn't really stop until they reached the skyscraper.

"We don't have—have time to tell anyone," Chip panted.

"No, no. I know that!"

"*We've* got to save him!"

Chip and Jack raced for the hoist. Remembering what Jedd had done before, Jack kept a constant pressure on the control. The hoist shot up as if it had been fired from a gun.

When they reached the top, they found themselves on a tier that was planked over. They were surprised to

find a crowd there—all men, most of them wearing bright orange steel helmets. There was a lot of movement and shouting.

Up through the steel work, the boys could see the dangling figure. He was an Indian. The man hung by his fingertips. Pain distorted his face.

"How much longer can he hold?" Chip gasped. His words sounded almost like a prayer.

The movement and the shouting had been a part of an effort to put a tarpaulin under the hanging man, the boys soon realized.

"Come on, Chip," Jack cried. "Let's make ourselves useful."

In their positions at the tarpaulin, Jack and Chip were separated by two men.

The man next to Jack said, "Hold on for all you're worth! There's going to be an awful pull, I tell you, when Sam drops and hits this tarp."

Everyone around the edge of the tarpaulin stood tense, expectant. All eyes were lifted to the hanging figure.

Another rescue operation was under way. Loftus,

the foreman, yelled directions angrily as a boom was swinging around the mast of a derrick. Its cables were hooked to a steel girder and on the girder there were two men, both Indians. One stood holding onto the cables that held the girder. The other man sat at one end of the girder, his legs gripping it. The man who stood gave hand signals to the operator of the derrick. When his first finger was pointed up, this meant he wanted the girder raised higher. He wiggled the finger for more speed. The idea was to swing the girder around so that the man on the end of it would be able to grab the hanging man and pull him to safety.

Would they make it before the man dropped? If the man dropped, would the tarpaulin catch him?

A man with a bullhorn repeated to the hanging man, "If you have to let go, Sam, swing inward. We got this tarp under you. But hold on, Sam, if you can. . . ."

Silence followed. The murmur of traffic in the street below seemed to come from another world. Everyone waited. It was as if everyone had stopped breathing in order not to disturb the fine balance upon which hung the fate of the hanging man.

Then effortlessly, as in a slow-motion film, the girder swung into position and the seated man wrapped both arms around Sam's waist. Sam then let go and settled into a seated position on the end of the girder, facing the man whose arms still held him tightly.

The tarpaulin was dropped now. Some of those who had been holding it let out a cheer, but they were quickly silenced by those who couldn't believe that Sam had as yet been saved.

Jack and Chip moved with the others toward the rescue girder.

"Say," Jack said, "isn't that Ward over there?"

"I don't see him."

Jack grabbed his brother's arm and led him to where Ward and his father were standing.

A cheer went up as the rescued man arose from the girder and walked away.

"Trouble, trouble, trouble," Mr. McGrath said, shaking his head. "Sam got dizzy. First time, too. Why, he's an old-timer at this business. Say, I suppose you know Mrs. Marsh is sick."

"No," both Jack and Chip chorused.

"That's not going to speed up this job," Mr. McGrath said, shaking his head again.

Ward took Jack and Chip aside. "You guys said you weren't coming up here anymore. What's the big idea?"

"We just wanted to see Mrs. Marsh," Jack said.

"You heard what Dad said. She's sick and over at her hotel."

"You know which hotel it is?"

Ward shook his head. "Wait a minute," he said. "I'll ask Dad."

Ward came back with some startling news: Mrs. Marsh was living in the Martinique.

Jack and Chip looked at one another in disbelief.

"What's the matter?" Ward asked them anxiously.

"Are you sure she lives in the Martinique?"

"That's what Dad said. He said she just moved there from the hotel she was in." Ward looked around nervously. "Oh, oh! Loftus is heading this way! You guys better get going."

14

A Visitor in the Apartment

Jack and Chip hurried to the Martinique Hotel. On the way Chip said, "At least we're not going as fast now as we did when we saw that guy hanging."

Jack made no comment. He was lost in his own thoughts.

"Why is Mrs. Marsh living in the same hotel with Bancroft? He's her big enemy, isn't he?"

"You know it could have happened by accident, Chip, that she moved into the same hotel."

"You think maybe she doesn't even know Bancroft is living there?"

"I don't know! How would I know?"

"I just asked you what you thought!" Chip snapped. "You don't have to bite my head off."

After that they walked along in silence. When they reached the Martinique, Jack hesitated before entering. "I didn't mean to yell at you, Chip," he apologized. "I was just on edge. It's hard for me to believe that Sam was dizzy. I know for a fact that the Mohawk Indians are as surefooted as—as mountain goats."

"He couldn't have been pushed— Somebody could have shot an air rifle at him—or something like that. A BB could sting enough to make you lose your balance."

"Another thing's bothering me, too. Remember when Jedd was over there"—Jack gestured with his thumb to indicate the other side of the street—"he could have been on the lookout for Bancroft—not for Mrs. Marsh, the way we thought."

Inside the hotel, Chip followed Jack across the lobby to the housephones.

"You think you ought to tell her about Bancroft?" Chip asked as Jack picked up the receiver.

"Mrs. Marsh, please," Jack said to the operator. "Oh. Oh, I see. Okay. Thank you."

"What was that all about?" Chip asked as Jack hung up.

"The operator said Mrs. Marsh wasn't to be disturbed, that she wasn't accepting any calls. Sounds like she must really be sick. That's going to make it harder to get the skyscraper done on time. And that will make it harder for her to get well. We've just got to do something, but I don't know what."

They headed for the outside door. "Look over there," Chip said, with a movement of his head in the direction of the dining room. "There's that cart with ice-water pitchers." Chip was grinning now. "You want to go up and see Bancroft again?"

"Very funny," Jack said. "Where do we go from here? That's what I want to know. I just wonder if Ward's dad could give us some kind of a phony job around the skyscraper, so we could look around. I guess Mrs. Marsh isn't in a position to offer us jobs."

"Keep other Indians from falling? That what you mean?"

"Spot whoever it is," Jack said with vehemence, "who is trying to slow up the skyscraper schedule."

"And you know where we might end up? Hanging from a girder, like Sam. And I know very well, I couldn't hold on as long as he did."

"You said you wanted to go to a movie. When was it, yesterday? Let's go now, shall we?"

"Say, that's cool!"

"I want to stop thinking about all this," Jack said.

They picked the wrong movie. The feature was an adventure thriller about mountain climbing. In the climax the hero was stuck on a high peak, hanging by his fingertips.

On the way out of the theater, Jack said to Chip, "You know what that movie reminded me of? Sam—hanging onto that girder."

"I wonder why?" Chip said and laughed.

The boys spent most of the afternoon wandering around the Rockefeller Center area. They stared at the statue of Atlas in the court of the International Building, slipped into the shadowed, awesome interior of St. Patrick's Cathedral across the street, and explored Grand Central Station.

"You know how I feel?" Jack said when they finally

made it back to their apartment building.

"I'm dragging my tail," Chip answered. "That's all I know."

"I feel kind of guilty. Going to a movie and killing a whole day. Not doing anything for Mrs. Marsh. Maybe we *should* have talked to Ward's father, instead of just thinking about it."

As they approached their apartment, walking side by side down the corridor, Jack noticed a line of light under the door.

"We didn't leave the lights on, did we, Chip?"

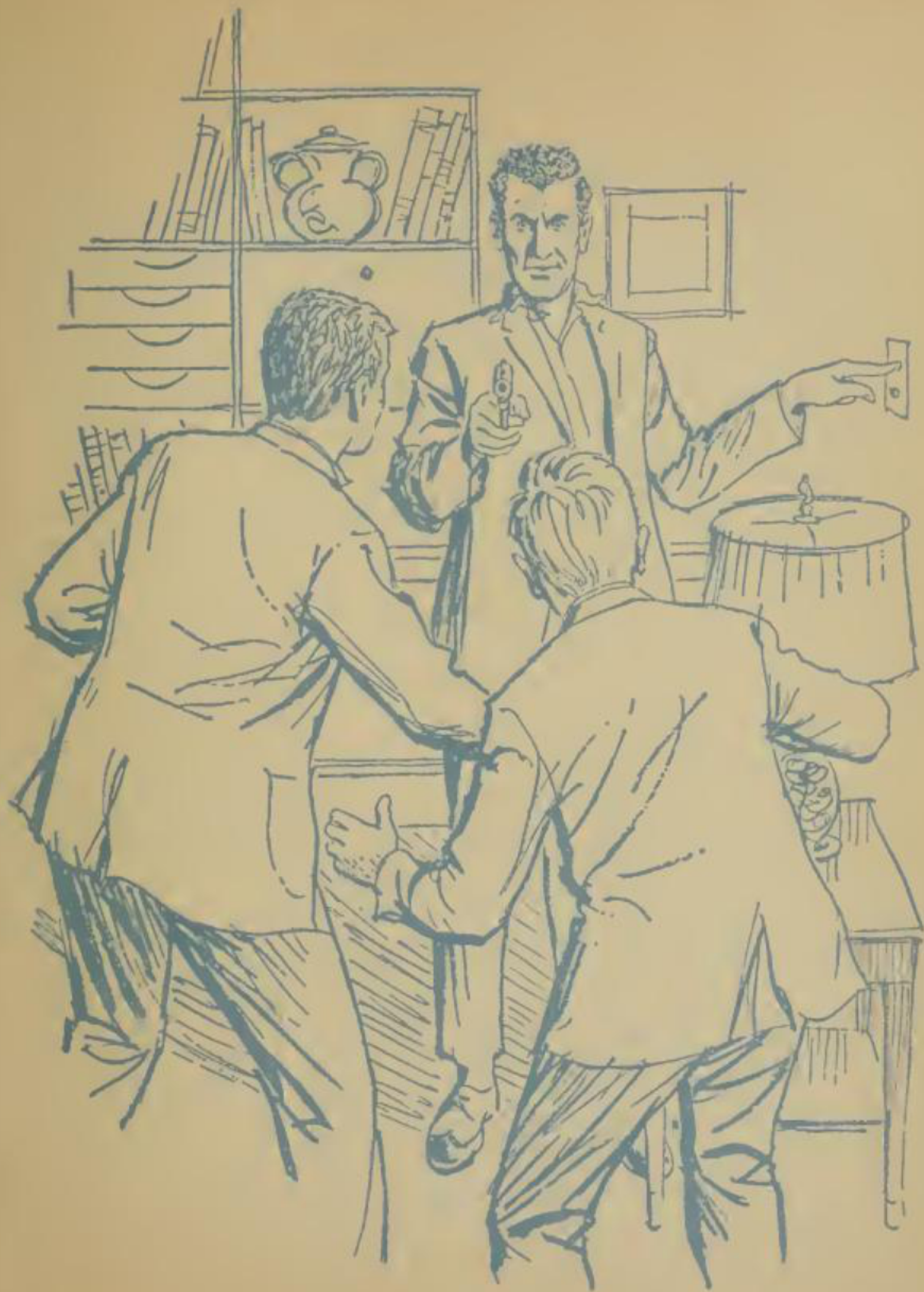
"What's the difference? I'm tired, tired. . . ."

"We must have left them on." Jack turned the key in the lock. "Otherwise, they wouldn't be on."

When Jack opened the door, the first thing the boys noticed was that the apartment was dark.

"Did I imagine that light under the door?" Jack asked, perplexed. "I was sure—"

Suddenly the light in the living room went on. A man stood at the wall switch. He was tall and thin. His fuzzy, dark hair which was parted on the side made him look old-fashioned. The gun in his hand, though,



looked very modern—and very real.

“I turned the light off,” he said, “when I heard you opening the door. So you probably did see the light under the door. I don’t want you to be worrying about it.” There was just a suggestion of a smile on his face now. “There’s something more important that I want you to worry about.”

“Who sent you?” Chip asked. The boys still stood in the doorway.

“Chip!” Jack snapped, motioning Chip not to say anything.

“It was Jedd, wasn’t it?”

“Come on in, come on in,” the man said. “Don’t be afraid of the artillery in my hand. I’m not going to use it—not unless I have to.”

He herded the boys over to a couch. The gun moved as though it were part of him, directing them.

With the flat of his hand, the man pushed Jack down onto the couch. When he approached Chip, obviously to do the same thing to him, Chip moved quickly around the end of the couch. Chip stood defiantly with his hands widespread on the back of the couch.

"Don't play games," the man said harshly. "Get back here! And sit down!"

Jack looked at Chip over his shoulder. "Do what he says, Chip!" he ordered. "Don't be a kook!"

Chip came slowly and carefully back around the end of the couch. He eased himself onto it.

The boys sat—waiting, looking up at the man. He no longer seemed to be in a hurry to say what he had on his mind.

"All right," the man with the gun said finally. "I've a few questions to ask you. Give me straight answers, you understand. Now, what are you to Wilson? Is he your father, your uncle, or what?"

"Oh!" Chip exclaimed. "Are you after Wilson?"

"He's no relation at all to us," Jack said.

The man made an emphatic gesture with his gun hand. "I told you I wanted straight answers."

"All we did was sublet his apartment. That hardly makes him a relative, does it?"

"Where's Wilson?" the man demanded.

"Why are you after him?" Chip asked eagerly.

"Maybe we ought not to tell you," Jack said evenly. "You certainly look like you're out to shoot him."

"What could we tell him that would matter, Jack?" Chip put in. "All we know is that he's in Europe. And, golly, Europe's a pretty big place."

The man turned so that the gun was leveled at Chip. "Is that a straight answer?"

"Yeah. Of course. You must know Europe is as big as—"

"Is Wilson there? Is he in Europe? You know that's what I meant!"

The boys convinced the man that Wilson was in Europe. They had a harder time making him believe that they didn't have his address.

As the man was leaving, warning Jack and Chip to forget that he had been there, Jack said suddenly, "Would you just answer one question? Did you try to get in here last night—about ten o'clock? Somebody was trying different keys. . . ."

The man nodded. "Forget that, too," he said. He slid quickly through the partially opened door.

"Hey, wasn't that something!" Chip exclaimed as

soon as the door had closed behind the man.

"At least, I'm glad we know who was here last night."

"That gun of his gave me the shakes," Chip answered.

"Chip, Dad wasn't so far off. I mean, his thinking we might get mixed up in one of Detective Wilson's cases."

"I don't know if we ought to go on living here," Chip said thoughtfully. "Mrs. Marsh moved out of her place. All she had was a poltergeist."

"You want to go sleep in Central Park?" Jack asked sarcastically.

"I wouldn't mind. You know, seeing that gun made me forget I was tired. What I meant, Jack, was that as long as we're in this apartment, we'll never know what's liable to happen."

High humidity and overcast skies gave the next morning an ominous quality. The boys didn't even bother getting dressed. They lolled around restlessly. The high point of the morning was the arrival of an airmail special-delivery letter from their father, containing a check. The letter was only two short paragraphs, having been written in a rush. Their father

merely reported that he didn't know yet when he would be back. He also mentioned that he had been photographing high-altitude test planes at a testing field in Burbank.

"You know what I'm going to do?" Jack said, heading for the phone. "I'm going to call Mrs. Marsh's room and find out how she is.

"Mrs. Marsh's room, please," he said to the desk clerk a moment later.

"You know, Jack, we should have called before this."

"This is funny." Jack ran his hand nervously through his red hair. "The phone's ringing, but there's no answer. Somebody's got to be there. Where's her nurse, the one that's supposed to be staying with her? She surely wouldn't go out and leave Mrs. Marsh alone."

"Maybe Mrs. Marsh is worse. Maybe they took her to the hospital."

"No." Jack shook his head. "The desk clerk would have told me if something like that had happened."

As the boys were walking down the corridor a little while later, they saw movers putting furniture in the freight elevator.

"That's strange," Jack said, stopping.

"What are you talking about?" Chip asked.

"See the green chair that they just put in the elevator? Isn't that the one we saw in Mrs. Marsh's apartment? The chair that moved. You know."

The boys walked closer to the elevator.

"That could be it," Chip said. "You have to remember, though, there's more than one green chair in the world."

Nevertheless, Chip suddenly approached one of the movers and asked if this was Mrs. Marsh's furniture.

The man nodded. "Moving her down one floor," he said.

"You mean she's moving in right now?" Chip asked.

"Looks that way, doesn't it?"

The man went off to help another mover carry a chest of drawers toward the elevator.

Jack walked along beside him. "I thought Mrs. Marsh was sick," he said. "I know you're moving her stuff. But she's not coming into the apartment today, is she?"

The man was red in the face from the weight of the

chest of drawers. "She's down there right now, if you're looking for her," he grunted.

The boys didn't have any trouble finding Mrs. Marsh's new apartment. Its door was open. An island of furniture stood in the corridor. But the woman inside, telling the movers where to place things, was definitely not Mrs. Marsh. She had black hair and was young enough to be Mrs. Marsh's daughter.

"I'm Miss Fredricks," she told the boys when they approached her. "Mrs. Marsh's secretary. May I—"

"How is she?" Jack asked. "She was pretty sick yesterday, I know. She couldn't even talk to me on the phone."

"Well, she insisted on leaving the hotel. The moving, you see, had been arranged for today. Nothing the doctor or the nurse or I could say would stop her."

"Is she here now? One of the men upstairs said—"

"She's on her way. Would you excuse me for a moment?"

Miss Fredricks walked away to give the movers further directions.

"Might as well wait for Mrs. Marsh," Jack said.

"You going to ask her what you wanted to yesterday?"

"Why not? If we can hang around the skyscraper—" Jack broke off. Mrs. Marsh had just stepped out of the elevator.

She came directly toward them—tall, pale, dressed in black. She carried a tightly rolled umbrella. It, too, was black.

"Hello, dear," she called to Miss Fredricks. Then she said to the boys, "Even this, young men"—she pointed the umbrella at the furniture in the corridor—"is better, far better than being imprisoned by a sick-bed."

"Are you well enough—"

"Women my age pamper themselves," Mrs. Marsh cut in on Jack's words. "And something dreadful has happened." Her thin hands twisted the umbrella nervously. "Though I'm up out of bed, I'm not sure where to turn. I'll go to my office and—"

"We'd like to help you," Jack said. "What—what happened?"

"You know, of course, we have Indians working on

the skyscraper," the woman began.

Chip nodded. "We saw one rescued yesterday."

Mrs. Marsh must not have heard Chip, for she went on as if he hadn't spoken. "They do the high steel dangerous work. It's practically impossible to get anyone else to do that kind of work. And that, young men, is the awful part of it, because *they have walked off of the job.*"

"The Indians have?" Chip exclaimed.

"Why?" Jack asked. "Why, Mrs. Marsh?"

"You want to know what they say? It isn't the real reason, of course. Joe Lahache, their spokesman, says they're not getting enough overtime. But that's such a feeble excuse. Why, my dear boys, they're getting more overtime than they can possibly handle."

"You think Bancroft has something to do with their walking off?" Jack asked.

Mrs. Marsh took a deep breath. She closed her eyes. "Possibly," she said, finally.

After the boys left Mrs. Marsh, they went downstairs. They stood under the dark blue canopy in front of the building. They watched the rain for a while.

"I want to see McGrath," Jack said.

"He's not going to be able to give you a job," Chip said. "Why didn't you ask Mrs. Marsh? You kept saying you were going to do that."

"I want to find out where Joe Lahache lives," Jack said irritably. "That's why I want to see McGrath."

McGrath gave them complete directions; he even drew a map. They ended up taking all three subway lines—IRT, BMT, and the Independent. Finally, they found the North Gowanus section in Brooklyn where Joe Lahache lived.

The rain stopped. The air was hot and muggy. Vapors rose from the street as the sun broke through the clouds.

They stopped a few doors from the brownstone in which Joe Lahache had an apartment. They could see that sitting on newspapers, on the stoop of the house, was an Indian both boys recognized.

"Hey," Chip said, "he's one of the guys who helped rescue Sam."

"He sure is. I've a hunch he's Lahache."

Jack and Chip continued on to the brownstone. They stood at the foot of the stoop. "We wanted to see Joe

Lahache," Jack said politely.

"Sit down. I'm Lahache," the man said, moving to one side and spreading the newspapers so that they would have a dry place on which to sit.

"We saw you rescue Sam yesterday," Jack said.

"That was neat," Chip added. "Real, real cool."

Joe Lahache smiled and nodded. He had a crew cut, which made his broad face seem all the broader.

"We're friends of Mrs. Marsh," Jack said.

"She's a very fine woman," Lahache said, turning very serious. "Did she send you to talk to me? We can't go back. We got a good construction job in Wisconsin, a lot of overtime."

"But you're getting overtime with Mrs. Marsh, aren't you?" Jack asked.

"She said that you were," Chip put in.

"We're getting overtime," Lahache said hesitantly. "Mrs. Marsh wouldn't say something that wasn't true. She's a very, very fine woman."

They waited for him to explain why the Indians were still determined to leave, even though they were getting overtime. But Lahache lapsed into silence,

staring straight ahead as if they weren't there.

Suddenly, still looking straight ahead, Lahache said, "I saw a ghost. . . . I swear to you I saw it." Lahache turned his head and looked at Jack and Chip. "A ghost. *A ghost*, all the way at the top of Mrs. Marsh's skyscraper. . . ."

"A ghost!" Chip exclaimed. "No fooling!"

Jack arose on the steps, slowly, thoughtfully. "You mean to say this ghost has scared you off?" he asked. "I can hardly believe that."

Lahache looked up at Jack. There was something he wanted to say, but he hesitated.

"What I mean is," Jack went on hurriedly, "you do work that's so dangerous. Why, Mrs. Marsh can't get anybody to replace you and the other Indians. So ghosts wouldn't. . . ."

Joe Lahache stood up. His hand went to his hip pocket. Chip automatically got up, too.

Lahache removed a snapshot from his wallet. He looked at it closely, then he said, "The ghost I saw was of a close friend, a very close friend. I'm sure it was Sasoon. He was killed on a bridge job. First job he had after he left the reservation."

Lahache handed the picture to Jack. Chip crowded closer to see it. In the picture, Sasoon stood on a girder which was up so high that the only background was the sky. He had one arm raised, as though he were waving.

"The ghost looked just like him," Lahache declared, "just like in that picture. It vanished fast"—Lahache snapped his fingers—"but what I saw was exactly like Sasoon in that picture, arm up and everything. Only difference was a kind of a glow, like a light all around him."

"You want to see this?" Jack said, handing the picture to Chip.

"Don't laugh," Lahache continued, "but I know why Sasoon came back."

The boys didn't laugh; they merely waited.

"You said that you saw what happened at the job

yesterday—how Sam almost fell. Death came mighty close. That's why Sasoon came back—to warn us to leave the job."

Suddenly the rain began again. They hurried to pick up the newspapers. Then they moved quickly off the stoop and into the foyer of the brownstone, where they stood silently facing the street, watching the rain.

Finally Lahache said, "This weather is no good for Mrs. Marsh. It'll hold up the rest of the work on the job."

"Do you think the skyscraper is jinxed or something?" Chip asked.

"I'm not superstitious," Lahache replied. "But I know what I saw."

"You told the other men?" Jack asked.

"What I saw?" Lahache nodded. "But I didn't tell Mrs. Marsh. I thought it would make it worse for her if she knew."

"If you told the men now that it was all a mistake. . . ."

Lahache shook his head vigorously.

"Don't you see," Jack persisted, "that if you told

them it was a mistake they'd go back to work? That would mean—"

"I know what it would mean," Lahache interrupted. "Mrs. Marsh would meet her deadline. She wouldn't lose a lot of money."

"Even more than that," Jack said quickly. "The reputation of her company wouldn't be ruined."

Lahache was obviously distressed when the boys went down the steps a few moments later. "I sure hate leaving Mrs. Marsh in the fix she's in," he said, looking down at them from the stoop. "If you see her, please tell her. Would you? I want her to know." He raised his hand in farewell.

At the first corner was a hot-dog cart. Its big black and orange umbrella now shielded it from the sun instead of the rain.

"I'm hungry," Chip said.

"How can you be hungry? Mrs. Marsh is in a tough spot, and you think about food."

"Who's thinking about food? I'm just hungry."

A wad of dripping sauerkraut went with the hot dog that Chip bought.

"That makes my mouth water," Jack said.

"Buy one," Chip told him. "Mrs. Marsh won't hold it against you."

Jack did. Later he said thoughtfully, "There's only one way to get Lahache to change his mind."

"Yeah?" Chip said doubtfully.

"It's simple. Show Lahache that the ghost he saw was a phony."

"Oh, *that is simple.*"

"It *is* simple. I mean it. All we have to do is assume it's phony—and then prove our assumption."

"And you think that's simple?"

"We've got to spend a night in the skyscraper," Jack said thoughtfully, as though to himself. "There's no getting around that."

"Are you serious?" Chip was incredulous.

"Sure. What's the matter? Are you scared?"

"Oh, no," Chip said, shaking his head. "I just don't like the idea of sleeping on one of those girders. They're hard and narrow and high up and—"

"Okay, Chip. Be a clown. Who has to sleep on a girder? But I'm going to spend the night there."

"Go ahead," Chip snapped, equaling his brother's belligerence. "No point in both of us getting killed. That would just make Dad sore."

The boys lapsed into silence. For a while neither would take the first step toward making up.

Then Jack broke the silence as they boarded the subway for the ride back to Manhattan. "Maybe you were right, Chip," he said thoughtfully. "It's probably best if just one of us spends the night looking for the ghost."

Chip didn't answer. He glanced at Jack after the train began to move, but still he didn't say anything. Finally he held his mouth close to Jack's ear because of the roar of the train and said, "I better stay with you in the skyscraper—at night."

Jack looked at Chip sharply. "It's dangerous!" he half shouted. "Maybe you shouldn't!"

"If it's that dangerous, you shouldn't go, either!"

"Oh, I'm going!"

"Then so am I!"

As they left the train at Times Square and headed up the stairs to the street, Chip grabbed Jack by the arm. "I thought of something. . . ."

The surge of a crowd on the stairs separated the boys. It wasn't until they were outside that Chip was able to tell Jack his idea—that maybe what Lahache had seen was a joke the poltergeist was playing on Mrs. Marsh.

"That still doesn't change what we've got to do," Jack said firmly.

As they crossed the street and headed east, Chip said, "Maybe we ought to see Professor Jamison."

"What good would that do? What could he tell us?"

"You think I'm trying to get out of spending the night in that haunted skyscraper?"

"Did I say you were?"

"Well, I have the feeling that's what you're thinking."

"Wait a minute," Jack said, slowing down. "Maybe we won't have to, after all."

"Stay at the skyscraper, you mean?"

"There's always at least one practical joker where there are a lot of workmen. Isn't that right?"

"So?"

"So maybe Bancroft and Jedd didn't rig this whole thing to get the Indians to quit. This practical joker might have come along at just the right time. It might

have been just a lucky break for them. What do you say we ask Mr. McGrath? He'd know if any of the workmen are practical jokers."

When they reached the skyscraper it looked deserted.

"It must be because of the rain," Chip said. "It doesn't look like anyone worked today."

Just then a figure came striding out of the construction shack toward them.

"What do you want?" The man resembled a hostile, bantam rooster. He had a beaked nose, a fluff of thin white hair, and wore a sweat shirt. "Private property. You're on private property."

"Is Mr. McGrath around?" Jack asked politely.

"No one's here." He muttered something more about private property. "My job's to keep everybody away. I'm a watchman. You want to see somebody, you come when they're here."

Jack and Chip nodded and walked off. Half a block up the street, Jack slowed down to a full stop.

"What's the matter?" Chip asked, stopping, too.

"I was just thinking. That night watchman shouldn't give us too much trouble when we come back. The

whole trick will be to find a good place to hide—a place from which we can still see what's going on.”

“You mean see the ghost—or whatever?”

“Right,” Jack said.

17

The Skyscraper at Night

Jack and Chip didn't waste any time when they entered their apartment. Jack made hamburgers. He surrounded the hamburgers with potato chips and with canned baked beans. For dessert he fixed himself a root-beer float. Chip ate all of the remaining ice cream—right out of the carton.

Jack got a flashlight and put it on the table so he would be sure not to forget to take it. "That's one thing we'll surely need," he said.

"Maybe I'll take my camera along," Chip mused. "I didn't get a shot of the poltergeist. Maybe I'll have better luck with this ghost."

All the way downtown on the bus the boys made plans. When they were a block from the skyscraper they stopped, ignoring the drizzle that had begun again. Lights reflected from their glistening black raincoats.

"We still don't know," Chip said, "how we're going to get by that watchman."

"He can't be everyplace at once," Jack said irritably. "I thought I told you that."

"He seemed like a lively character, that's all I know."

They moved on. But after a minute they stopped again. Chip didn't see why they had to go to the top of the skyscraper.

"Where was Lahache when he saw Sasoon's ghost?" Jack demanded. "On the top floor, of course."

"How do you think we're going to get up there? The watchman will come running if we use the hoist. It's bound to make a racket."

They made it to the hoist, talking in whispers now, moving on tiptoe. Red lanterns stood like sentinels, one on each side of the hoist.

"Maybe it's switched off for the night," Chip whispered suddenly.

Jack played the beam of the flashlight inside the hoist. "Just be quiet," he said. He pushed the control, but nothing happened.

"What did I tell you? It's switched off. They—"

"Quiet! Quiet!"

A door slammed. Quick footsteps hammered the wooden sidewalk in front of the skyscraper.

"The watchman," Chip hissed, grabbing Jack. Jack quickly broke free. He picked up a yard length of two-by-four and threw it like a javelin from the hoist. It made a clattering sound up the street.

"Keep down low," Jack ordered Chip.

They remained motionless on the floor of the hoist as the watchman rushed to the spot where the two-by-four had landed. "Who's there! Stop! Stop!" he yelled.

"Let's go!" Jack said to Chip.

The boys scooted out of the hoist like football players. Jack appeared to be running interference for Chip. They headed straight through the darkness of the skyscraper to the open door of the lighted elevator.

Jack pressed a button. Up they went.

Jack and Chip just looked at each other. They were

too out of breath to express their surprise.

When the elevator reached the top floor, Chip gasped, "That was too easy."

"What do you mean, easy?" Jack said. He rubbed his right arm. "I nearly wrecked my arm heaving that hunk of wood."

"I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about how we got up here in the elevator. It felt to me as if that ghost lured us up here—into a trap."

They spun around in terror when the elevator door closed behind them, leaving them in darkness.

Jack switched on his flashlight. He swept the beam of light all around. "We've got to find a place to hide—and fast!"

"You think the watchman—" Chip was afraid to finish.

"Of course. He came back and found that the elevator wasn't on the ground floor. He'll be up. He knows we're up here."

"I *thought* we were going into a trap."

"We goofed," Jack said. "That's what we did."

They looked frantically for a place to hide, all the time

moving farther and farther away from the elevator.

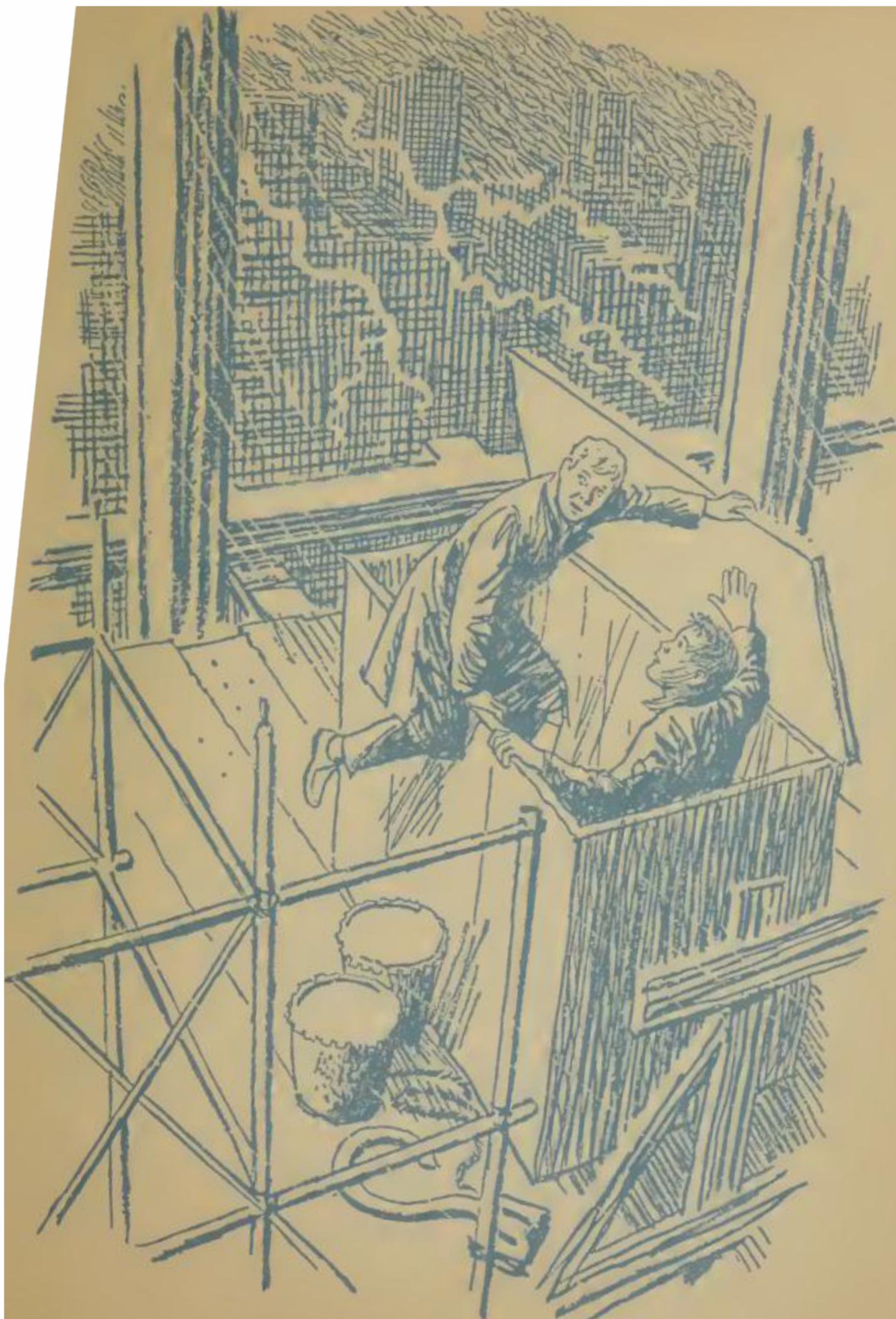
They came to a section with no overhead cover. For the first time the boys realized that the misty rain had developed into a thunderstorm. They ducked back inside to keep from being soaked. But they couldn't escape the reverberating thunder and the sight of the lightning, crackling and snapping at the steel columns and girders.

Chip bumped into a box when he jumped back from a lightning flash whose fiery tendrils seemed to be reaching for him. The frequent lightning flashes showed the box to be the shape and size of a piano box. Perhaps they could find refuge inside.

After throwing out a crane hook, which was hanging in the back of the box, and hunching their shoulders, they were able to stand in the box. By raising the lid a bit, both the boys could get a crack's eye view of the outside.

"Move a little," Chip growled. "You've got my camera jammed into my ribs."

Jack twisted around. Suddenly he stopped. "Look!" he hissed. "The elevator's just come up!"



The watchman stepped out of the elevator. He stood for a long indecisive moment in its light.

"He's got a gun!" Chip whispered hoarsely.

"I see it!"

"You act like it's nothing. He might shoot us."

"Hey, you're pushing up on the lid too much!"

"I hope there's enough air," Chip whispered as they lowered the lid.

"Shhhh. You want him to hear you?"

The sound of the watchman's footsteps went by. They waited for a time before they raised the lid. Finally they saw the big round eye of the torch head for the elevator. They saw the watchman as he stepped into it.

Then they saw a shadow, long and distorted. It lay across the planked floor.

"You see that?" Chip whispered tensely.

"Yeah, yeah!"

The elevator door closed, shutting off the source of light, blotting out the weird shadow.

"That's not a ghost," Chip gasped.

"Let the lid down!" Jack ordered. "That thing's coming our way!"

There was the sound of steps on the planked floor. Then an explosive boom of thunder. As the thunder rumbled away into the distance, the boys could once again hear the steps.

"Ghosts don't make shadows," Jack whispered in the darkness of the box. "And you can't hear them walk."

"How about in *A Christmas Carol*?"

"That was a story. Chains clanked in it, anyhow.

There weren't any footsteps."

The steps sounded very close to the box now.

"If it's not a ghost," Chip whispered excitedly, "I ought to be able to get a picture of whoever it is. I have the camera all set. The trick is finding him in the dark, then getting the focus."

"Listen! I'll push up the lid." Jack sounded as excited as Chip. "I'll point him out to you with the light from my flashlight! Okay?"

The steps approached the box. Passed.

"Go ahead!" Chip whispered.

The lid of the box went up as planned. But in the effort, Jack fumbled and dropped the flashlight.

Chip scrambled out of the box. "Be careful!" Jack yelled. But Chip didn't pay any attention. Chip's thoughts were concentrated on getting a picture. He stood still, listening hard to locate the position of the steps. But there weren't any. He began to take long, careful strides forward in the dark. Just as he heard the staccato, frightened pound of heels on the planking, Chip tripped. He fell on his elbows in his attempt to protect the camera. He managed to snap a picture

clumsily from that position.

The strobe light when Chip snapped the picture illuminated a figure far to his right. He quickly set the camera for another shot and aimed it where he had seen the figure.

"You all right?" Jack asked anxiously.

Chip turned in getting up. Jack had the flashlight now. Its light angled down at him. "I took two," he said. "I think I got him with the second shot. I'm pretty sure."

"Did you get a look at him?" Jack asked tersely.

"You ever hear of a ghost wearing a T-shirt? That's all I noticed—a T-shirt."

"We've got to get home and develop that film," Jack said eagerly. "The picture you took might tell us all we need to know!"

They reached the elevator by the light of the flashlight.

Jack pressed the button for the elevator, then he switched off the flashlight. They stood waiting silently in the darkness.

"Jack!" Chip whispered tensely. "That watchman's

going to be laying for us now!"

No answer from Jack. The fitful lightning added eeriness to the darkness.

"Jack—"

Chip broke off because the elevator arrived. Its door slid open. Light streamed like a rolled-out rug from the elevator door through the darkness.

"Come on," Jack said as he walked into the elevator.

Chip took a step toward the door, but that was as far as he would go. "Jack," he said, "didn't you hear what I said about the watchman?"

"Of course. Of course, I heard." He grabbed Chip's arm and tried to pull him into the elevator. Though they struggled, they both did their best to be as quiet as possible. Finally Chip was able to pull Jack out of the elevator.

Jack let go of Chip. "Listen, Chip," he pleaded. "I realize the watchman might be down there just waiting for us."

"So why are you in such a rush to go down?"

"You know why. To develop that picture you took. It might be the answer to everything."

"Okay, okay," Chip said grudgingly.

"We just have to take the chance."

"I already agreed."

Halfway down, Jack pressed the stop button.

"What's the matter?" Chip demanded. "Did you suddenly turn chicken?"

"Just listen to me. That watchman might be waiting for us."

"What have I been telling you?"

"Listen. Just listen. He has a gun."

"You're telling me? I was the one who—"

"All I'm trying to say is that I don't want you to do something wild. Remember when that guy had a gun pointed at you in our apartment, how—"

"I sat down when he told me to, didn't I?"

"Let's not argue."

"Who's arguing?"

"This—this is my point, Chip. If that watchman's waiting for us, we tell him everything, *everything*. And we've got to let him know how important it is to get that film developed. Important for Mrs. Marsh."

They descended the rest of the way without saying

a word. When the elevator stopped and its door slid open, they hesitated. Finally they looked out cautiously. As soon as it was obvious that the watchman wasn't there, they moved quickly from the elevator into the darkness.

"Be careful," Jack whispered to Chip. "We don't want to run into him."

"I wonder where he is."

"Just be careful."

In sight of the sidewalk, they saw the red flashing light atop a prowler car. A few more steps and they saw the watchman. He was bent forward, talking to someone inside the car.

The boys left the building as quickly and as silently as possible. Neither paused to catch his breath until they reached the subway. And when they got off the subway, they ran for home.

Chip stopped Jack as they stepped from the elevator on the tenth floor. "I just remembered that guy in our apartment with the gun," he said.

"He'd have no reason to come back here," Jack answered, starting down the corridor. "I'm anxious to

see what you've got on that film."

"I wonder if that was why Wilson went to Europe—because of that guy."

"No light under the door this time," Jack said with relief as he put the key in the lock. "And I'm glad. We don't have time to talk to guys with guns."

Chip went right to work in the bathroom developing the film. Jack stood nearby.

"You're not going to speed things up," Chip snapped, "by being right on top of me."

"How about leaving out the water step?" Jack suggested. "Didn't Dad say you could? We're not trying to get a work of art, you know."

"We won't. Don't worry."

"All we want is a resemblance. You know, Chip, I can hardly wait to see who it is."

"Well, it's not Mrs. Marsh."

"Why? Because she doesn't wear T-shirts?"

Chip shrugged. "She's just about the only person I can eliminate—for sure."

"You got a face shot, didn't you?"

Chip shrugged again. "I hope so."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I said. I hope so."

Jack gestured in despair. "If all you got was his back. . . ."

Chip began to agitate the film in the developer. "I just about fell on my face, remember. Don't expect miracles."

Finally Chip hung up the film to dry.

"I'm speeding up the drying time," he explained to Jack. "Giving a negative an alcohol bath will do it. You see, I am trying to hurry things."

When the negative dried, Jack studied it eagerly.

"Give me a couple of minutes, will you?" Chip complained. "Will you let me make a print?"

"I think we've got something. The negative looks like it's a face shot, doesn't it?"

"Time will tell."

As soon as the print was ready, they examined it together.

"Is this a person?" Chip said, aghast. "It's not a ghost. It looks more like some kind of monster."

Jack raced out of the bathroom with the print. "We

need better light to look at this thing!" he exclaimed.

He held the print under a pole lamp. Chip craned his neck to see, too.

"It's Ward!" Jack exclaimed. "Definitely. Isn't it? Isn't it Ward?"

"You mean Ward McGrath?"

"That's who I mean—Ward McGrath!"

19

Mysterious Disappearance

Chip grabbed the print from Jack and studied it.

"You know why you got that monster effect?" Jack said. "Your flash came up from the floor, that's why. That made those heavy shadows around the eyes and across the forehead. You can tell that's what happened by the way the chin and jaw are all lit up."

"It's Ward all right," Chip said in amazement, still looking at the print.

"I wonder what he was doing up in the skyscraper."

"Probably the same thing we were."

"Maybe." Jack rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "And maybe not."

"Hey, don't tell me you suspect Ward!"

Jack's grimace suggested mild disgust. "Chip," he said, "all I meant was that we don't know why he was up there."

Jack helped Chip clean up the mess he had made in the bathroom.

"It might be a good idea," Jack said, stacking the developing trays, "to talk to Ward in the morning. That's one way of finding out what he was doing."

"No matter what, you have to give the guy credit. I mean, his going up there alone. Golly, the first time I saw him I thought he was a coward. Remember how scared he was? Remember the way he beat it when he found out Dad wasn't a detective?"

Jack yawned, stretched, and then began to take off his shirt.

"I feel like hitting the sack, too," Chip said.

The ringing phone awakened them the next morning.

"That must be Dad!" Chip said excitedly.

They both scrambled out of bed and rushed to the

phone. Jack was the first to reach it.

"Is it Dad?" Chip demanded as soon as Jack picked up the phone.

Jack shook his head.

"Who is it?" Chip whispered.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Jack murmured.

Chip stepped closer. "Who is it?" he whispered again.

Jack tried to shove Chip away, first with his hand and then with his foot.

"Don't worry, Mr. McGrath," he said into the telephone. "I'm sure he'll turn up."

When Chip heard what he said, he stepped back, scratching his head, and waited impatiently for the call to end.

"Who's missing?" he asked, when Jack had hung up.

"What was the big idea of bothering me? When someone's talking on the phone—"

"Come on, Jack, tell me!"

"That was Mr. McGrath."

"Yeah. I know *that*."

"He said Ward didn't show up last night. Didn't come home."

"No kidding!" Chip sputtered in disbelief.

"He missed supper. He didn't call or anything. Boy, is Ward's father bugged!"

"You didn't tell him, did you, that we saw Ward last night?"

"No. You know I didn't." Jack walked away from Chip irritably. But he kept on talking. "If I had told him that," he said, "I'd have had to explain what we were doing up in the skyscraper."

Chip walked quickly, angrily, over to Jack. "Golly, Jack, you've got to tell him! It's a clue. It might help him find Ward."

"He'll probably turn up."

"But isn't his father worried? You said he was bugged."

"That still doesn't mean Ward's in danger. You know how Dad is with us. That's just the way fathers are."

Chip nodded. "Well, you're the one who talked to Mr. McGrath. You ought to know how he's taking it."

"He's bugged all right. But I still don't think we ought to tell—"

"Yeah. We might get Ward in trouble," Chip said

thoughtfully. "Maybe he doesn't want his father to know he was up in the skyscraper at night."

"It could be we'd be getting ourselves in trouble, too."

"Probably. And when Dad gets home—"

The doorbell rang. The boys were puzzled.

"It's not even seven yet," Jack said. "We're still in our pajamas."

Chip headed for the door, and Jack trailed after him. "Might be a special delivery from Dad," Chip said just before opening the door.

Without a word, Mr. McGrath entered the apartment. His face was pale, troubled. Like Ward, he wore a T-shirt. And instead of work clothes, he now wore a pair of light gray, summer slacks.

Jack was the first to speak. "How'd you get here so fast?" he said in amazement. "You were just talking to me on the phone."

"I was in a booth on the street corner," Mr. McGrath explained. "I really came up to see Mrs. Marsh. Then I changed my mind. I didn't want to bother her with my problems. She's got her own, besides being sick."

He hesitated. His worried eyes moved back and forth between Jack and Chip. "Are you sure there's nothing you can tell me?"

Jack and Chip didn't say anything. They exchanged guilty glances. Each seemed to be holding his breath for fear he might speak.

"You saw Ward, didn't you?" Mr. McGrath asked finally.

Chip glanced at Jack. Jack nodded his head.

Then the boys told Mr. McGrath everything—how they happened to go to the skyscraper to see the ghost Joe Lahache claimed he had seen; how they had taken a picture at the top of the skyscraper that turned out to be one of Ward.

Chip picked up the print from the table and handed it to Mr. McGrath. "I didn't develop the negative very evenly," he said. "Jack was rushing me to get it done."

Mr. McGrath nodded his head as he looked at the print. He seemed to be agreeing with all his thoughts.

"Mrs. Marsh wouldn't call in the police," Jack said. "She's afraid the publicity would wreck her business. That's why we tried to help her out."

"That's what Ward was doing," Mr. McGrath sighed. "He was trying to help me."

"I'm sure of it," Jack said firmly.

"Sure," Chip chimed in. "That's why he asked us to give him a hand."

Jack then told Mr. McGrath about Jedd and Bancroft. "Jedd warned us to keep away," he said. "And he didn't like Ward's being around the skyscraper, either."

"I think you ought to go to the police," Chip said.

"Oh, no," Mr. McGrath said. "That might give Mrs. Marsh the bad publicity she doesn't want. I'll hold off for a while longer. Ward's a good boy. He's got a lot on the ball. He can take care of himself."

After Mr. McGrath left, Chip said, "You know what I think? I think he's whistling in the dark. I think he really believes Ward's hurt or something."

"There's only one thing to do," Jack said decisively. "McGrath won't do it. So it's up to us."

"You mean tell Mrs. Marsh?"

"Right."

They had a quick breakfast, then went to Mrs. Marsh's apartment. Mrs. Marsh was still sleeping. The

boys left word with her secretary that Ward was missing.

When they got to the skyscraper, they searched everywhere for Mr. McGrath, thinking he might have news about Ward. It was early and apparently he hadn't arrived yet.

"The night watchman must have gone off duty," Chip said. "We'd see him, if he were still around."

"Maybe we should look for Ward right here," Jack said, running his hand nervously through his red hair.

"Wouldn't we have seen him?" Chip asked. "We've looked just about everyplace, trying to find his father."

"Maybe he's lying hurt someplace."

"You think he fell off a girder?"

"I hope not," Jack said. "He might have fallen down in a crevice—out of sight. All I'm doing is guessing. . . ."

The boys separated in the course of their search. They looked everywhere.

"Jack!" Chip suddenly cried out.

But even before Jack had a chance to look up, he felt himself grabbed from behind. He was quickly tied and gagged and an empty cement sack came over his head.

20

Jack Takes Charge

The cement dust inside the bag was almost unbearable. Jack slowed his breathing in an attempt to avoid inhaling the dust and its sharp penetrating odor.

His mind was racing. He tried to think of what he had seen before the bag and darkness descended on him. The shoe of the man who had tied him up. There was a burn on the tip of that shoe, a burn made by a red-hot rivet. He remembered seeing something else, too—a smear of light green paint on the man's trouser leg.

Jack felt himself being carried like a big, bulky bag. From the starting and the stopping, he deduced that he had a ride in the elevator. And since he had been on the

ground floor, he must have been taken up. Finally he was shoved to the floor and his legs tied together at the ankles.

Jack heard his abductor walk away. A door slammed.

I must be in the construction shack, Jack thought to himself.

He shook his head, trying to rid himself of the cement bag and its unpleasant odor. He crawled backward in an attempt to crawl out of the bag. But the bag had been pulled down securely over his shoulders.

When he bumped into a wall, he rolled over on his back and started kicking it. He kicked as hard as he could, partly out of anger at being tied up. It seemed, too, that this might be a way to attract attention and help.

As he paused to rest, he heard kicking continue. It was weird. Then he realized that Chip must have been tied up and thrown into the shack, also.

The kicking stopped. Jack kicked to start it again. But when the other kicking resumed, it came from a different side of the shack. Had Chip moved? Jack hadn't heard him.

Two solid thumps came from the spot where Jack had originally heard the kicks. They were answered by the kicks of someone else.

Jack's immediate thought was that Ward was in the shack, too. Overjoyed that the missing boy might be there, Jack kicked harder than ever at the wall. When he stopped, he heard sounds of the others still kicking.

But just as Jack was going to join in again, there was a reverberating clamor made by construction workers hammering at girders.

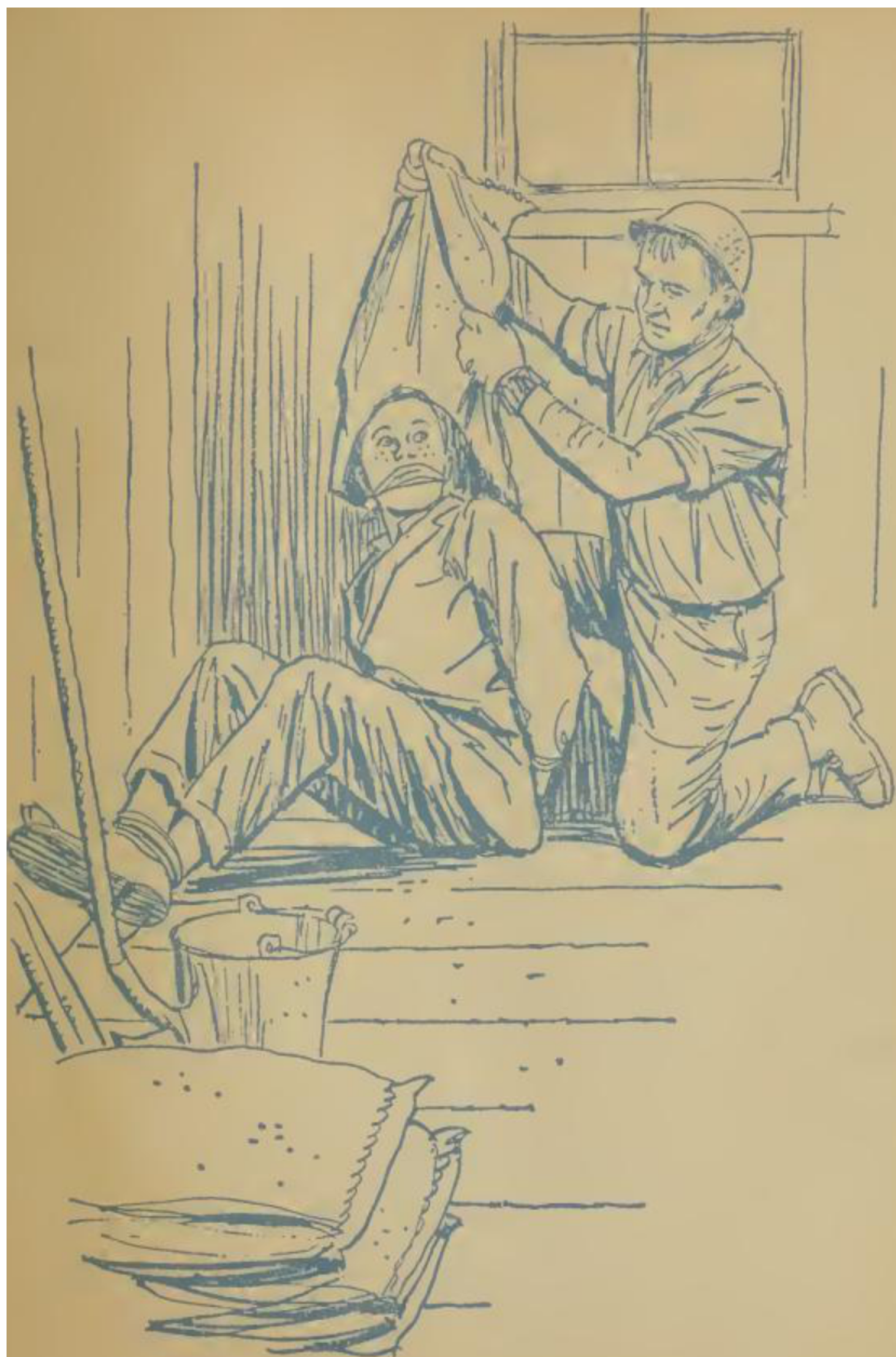
Jack's spirits fell. *With that going on*, he thought, *how is anyone ever going to hear us?*

The other two went on kicking, however—alternating, and at times together.

Because of all the noise, Jack didn't hear a workman come into the shack. Suddenly he felt the cement bag being pulled off his head.

Down on one knee, his steel helmet shoved back from his forehead, the man stared at Jack. "What's this all about?" he asked in astonishment.

The gag kept Jack from answering. All he could do was shake his head. As soon as the man removed the



gag, Jack sputtered that there were others tied up in the shack, also.

After cutting the ropes from Jack's wrists and ankles, the man and the boy hurried to the next figure on the floor.

Jack pulled the bag off Chip's head. "He's my brother," Jack told the man. "Don't you think you ought to go and take care of the other one? It's my guess he's Ward McGrath."

As he got up and moved away, the workman said in amazement, "Why, his old man's been racing all over looking for him. And he's been right here all the time."

As Jack took the gag out of Chip's mouth, he grinned and said, "I shouldn't do this. It's something I'm going to regret for the rest of my life."

Chip's first words were, "Go on and help that guy with Ward. I'm okay now that that smelly bag's off my head."

Jack ignored what Chip had said. He began to untie the rope binding Chip's wrists together.

"Why don't you go and help him with Ward?" Chip said insistently.

"Okay, okay. I'll have you loose in a minute. Listen, Chip, the next time you see somebody getting ready to jump me, would you yell a little sooner?"

"I did yell a little sooner. I can't help it if you've got bum reflexes. And don't forget I was grabbed, too."

They both worked at untying the rope around Chip's ankles.

By the time they headed for Ward, a swarm of men had crowded into the shack.

"Word that Ward was found must have gotten out," Jack said.

"You think his father knows?"

Jack started pushing through the crowd. "If he doesn't," he said, "he ought to be told."

Ward was surrounded. Everyone was questioning him. It wasn't until Mr. McGrath appeared that the three boys were able to make their way out of the shack. Even then, men still hung around them curiously.

Mr. McGrath had an arm about Ward's shoulders. "I want you to go home and rest," he said firmly.

Ward laughed. "Why, Pop, that's all I've been doing."

"I mean in a bed, not tied up on a floor."

"I'm okay. Honest I am."

"I don't know how to thank you fellows," Mr. McGrath told Jack and Chip warmly. "I'll find some way—"

"But, Mr. McGrath," Jack protested, "we didn't—"

Mr. McGrath put up his hand. "All I know is that I went to see you about Ward and then you found him."

Chip looked at Jack and shrugged.

But Jack refused to give up. "Look, Mr. McGrath, I don't want credit for something—"

Jack stopped when he noticed Mrs. Marsh marching their way. With her was a stocky, white-haired police officer, whose impressive appearance suited the gold badge he wore. The other two men—big and with a similar manner—looked like detectives.

Mrs. Marsh went straight to Ward. She took his hand and held it with both of hers. "I'm happy, very happy," she said, "that you're all right." Turning to Jack and Chip she told them, "My dear young men, I shall always be grateful to you for having found Ward."

Jack and Chip looked at one another. They both shrugged helplessly.

Mr. McGrath told Mrs. Marsh he was sorry she had had to call in the police.

"I know when I'm licked," she replied. "When a boy, your son, is abducted, I can no longer be concerned about notoriety. I had to call the police. I wanted their help and whatever other help I could get. I am old enough to realize my own limitations."

"You're not licked, Mrs. Marsh," Jack declared firmly.

"Young man, I appreciate what you and your brother have done. . . ."

Her words trailed off, implying that the boys could do nothing more for her.

Mrs. Marsh turned to speak to the police officer. After a few words with the detectives, the officer left.

"Jack," Chip whispered. "Do you see that ugly guy over there? Who is he? He looks awfully familiar."

"I don't know," Jack said absently. "But there's Joe Lahache." He pointed in another direction. "I just heard Mrs. Marsh tell the officer that she phoned a lot of people to help look for Ward. Hey! Bancroft just got off the elevator. She must have even called him!"

"I can't figure out who that guy is," Chip persisted.

"The one person I don't see is Jedd," Jack mused.

"I'm sure I saw that guy someplace."

"Maybe you saw him here, right in the skyscraper."

Chip shook his head. "It wasn't here. It's right—right on the tip of my mind. If I could—"

"Quiet down, will you? I'm trying to think of something, too."

Suddenly Mrs. Marsh smiled and called out, "Will the meeting please come to order!"

She didn't seem like an elderly woman now, but the capable head of a big company.

Many of those who were standing took seats on a pile of stacked lumber.

Mrs. Marsh waited a moment for everyone to settle down. "All I want to do," she explained, "is to express my thanks to all of you for responding to my call for help. I also want to commend you on your cooperation in the construction of the Wyndott Building. The time has come now, however—"

Jack walked quickly over to Mrs. Marsh, interrupting what she was about to say.

After Jack had spoken to her briefly, Mrs. Marsh turned from him. "Will you all," she said to the crowd, "please excuse me for one moment?"

Mrs. Marsh and Jack went into a huddle off to one side. They seemed to be in an argument.

Chip was curious. He moved closer, but all he heard was Jack's saying, "... there's plenty of time to surrender to Bancroft. If this doesn't check out, then—"

Jack stopped. Mrs. Marsh was nodding her head, agreeing with him.

She moved forward with Jack and Chip, introduced them, then turned the meeting over to Jack.

"You all know," Jack began, "that this building has to be completed by a certain date. And you probably all know that a lot of stuff has been going on to keep it from being completed on time. One of those things was putting Ward McGrath out of circulation. When my brother and I came here to look for Ward, someone put bags over our heads and tied us up."

Jack paused. His audience, circled about him, waited eagerly for him to continue. Jack stared hard at foreman Lou Loftus, who shifted his sprawled position on the

stacked lumber. He had no expression on his face.

"Before the bag came down over my head," Jack said finally, "I noticed the shoe of the man who had grabbed me. There was a burn on his shoe made by a red-hot rivet."

Jack moved forward a few steps and pointed down at Lou Loftus' shoes. "The burn was just like that!" he said accusingly.

The silence held for a long moment. Lou Loftus' laughter broke it.

Without even bothering to get up, Lou Loftus pointed to the feet of two other men who had similar burns on their shoes.

"Did you goof!" Chip whispered to Jack.

But Jack continued to stare at Lou Loftus. He was in an embarrassing hole; there seemed no way out of it.

Loftus sprawled even more, expressing contempt and arrogance. His legs were extended in front of him defiantly.

Suddenly Jack snapped his fingers as he recalled something. "Mr. Loftus," he said politely, "would you please stand up?"

"Stand up?" Lou Loftus repeated with a sneering smile. "Sure I'll stand up. But when I do, I hope you're not going to say I'm the one who tied you up because that guy was standing up at the time."

"No, I'm not going to say that," Jack answered quietly. "But I just remembered that the guy who tied me up had green paint on his trousers as well as a burn on his shoe."

Loftus grimaced sourly. "This is ridiculous," he said.

"Stand up, would you, please?"

Loftus hesitated. "Yeah," he said finally. "Why not?"

But Lou Loftus took his time in getting up from his sprawled position.

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A Confession

Jack pointed at Loftus' trouser leg. "The man who tied me up," he said, "had paint just like that on him. And you're the only one around who has both a burned shoe *and* a smear of paint on his trousers."

Loftus shook his head, smiling sourly. "You been watching TV too much. You think you're a detective."

"Just a minute," Jack said. He turned to where Joe Lahache was standing. "Where were you, Mr. Lahache," he asked, "when you first saw what you believed to be the ghost of your friend?"

Joe Lahache moved to a spot only a few feet away from where everyone was assembled.

"This is the place," Lahache said firmly. "I'm sure. It's not something you'd forget."

While he spoke, Joe Lahache looked upward—as he must have done on the night he saw the ghost. Jack looked up, too. And he saw something that made his heart pound with excitement.

"Is there a ladder around?" he asked. His voice was confident.

As one of the men set up a ladder for Jack, Loftus grumbled that the whole thing was ridiculous.

Jack went up the ladder fast. Everyone was watching him curiously. They saw him grab a short piece of cord which was dangling from a beam. He came back down the ladder then, still holding onto the cord. He was unrolling what looked like a window shade. A picture gradually appeared, however—a blown-up photostat of the photograph which Joe Lahache carried in his wallet! The photostat, outlined with a wire band of luminous paint, had been glued to a window shade.

Joe Lahache stood shaking his head in disbelief.

"And you see, Mr. Lahache," Jack said, "to make this so-called ghost disappear, all you have to do is this."

Jack gave a few jerks on the cord, then let it go. The picture shot up and disappeared.

Jack walked toward Lou Loftus. "The paint on that picture," he declared, "is the same as the paint on your trousers. You must have been planning to use that picture again. Otherwise, you wouldn't have left it up there."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Lou Loftus growled.

"I think you do," Jack answered sharply.

"You're a smart-aleck kid, and I don't—"

"For further proof, come into the construction shack. I'll turn off the lights, then everybody will be able to see the paint on your trousers glow—the way Joe Laha-che saw that band around the picture glow."

"Okay," Loftus snarled. "Do it your way."

He took a few steps in the direction of the construction shack, then swerved sharply to his right.

Jack grabbed for Loftus, but he wasn't able to hold onto him. He did delay him, however. Before Loftus could get his balance again, one of the detectives nailed him with a waist-high tackle.

"Why, Lou Loftus?" Mrs. Marsh cried. "Why would you turn on innocent boys?"

"Because I couldn't stand you as my boss," Loftus growled. "A woman—and an old woman at that."

"I don't understand. I simply don't understand."

"And not just an old woman," Loftus went on bitterly, "but the wife of Sam Marsh."

Mrs. Marsh prodded him with questions. She couldn't imagine what had motivated him.

Lou Loftus admitted that he was determined to run her out of the contracting business by terrorizing her in any way that he could. He was motivated by an overwhelming desire to get revenge on her late husband. Loftus had been envious of Sam Marsh's success. He had smoldered with resentment ever since Sam Marsh had refused to make him foreman of all the working gangs. To have Sam Marsh's wife for a boss was simply too much to take.

While Lou Loftus was telling his story, Chip continued to stare at the man whose identity eluded him. Chip noticed the man start to fidget and then begin to move stealthily away.

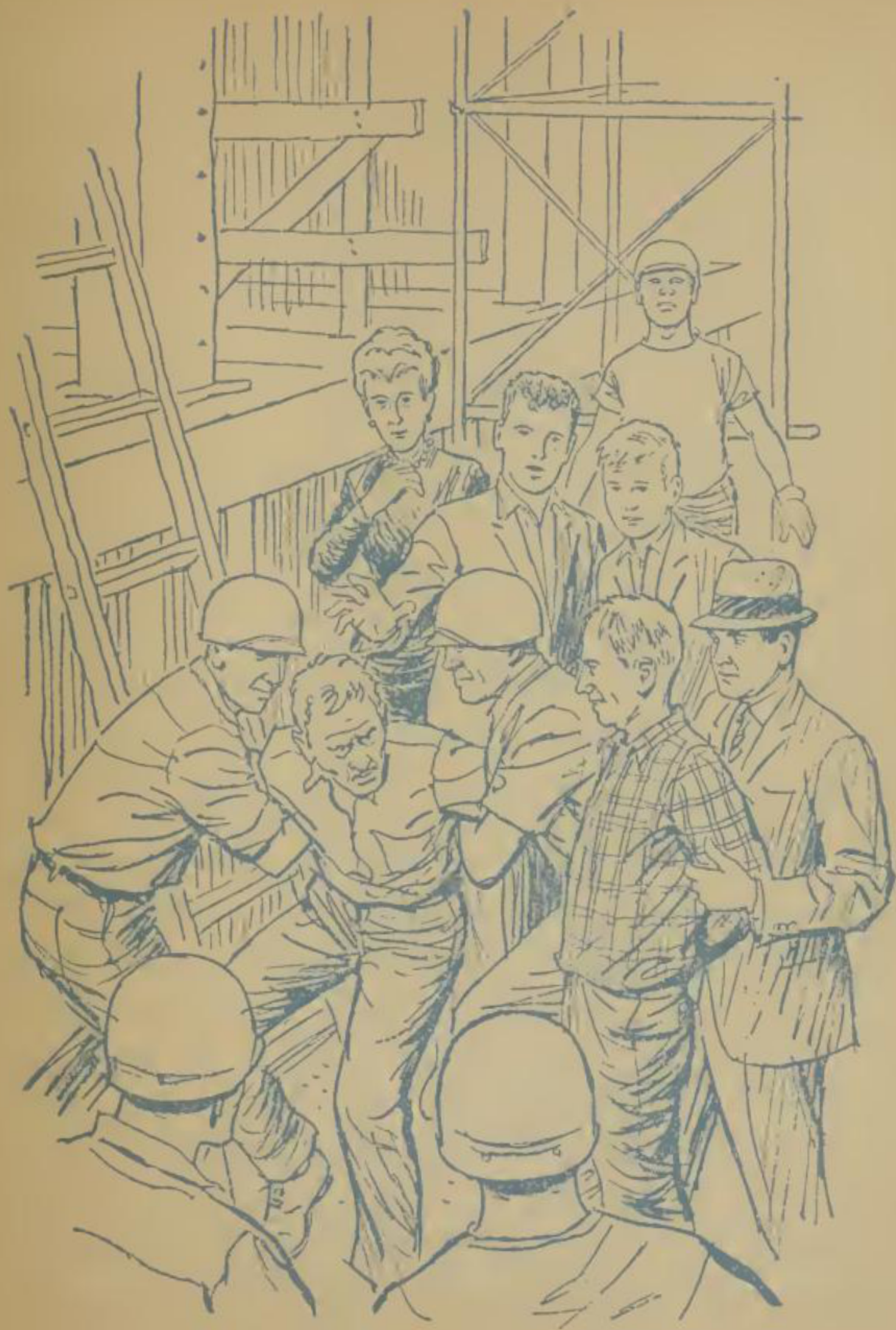
Without thinking, Chip yelled, "Stop him! He's trying to escape!"

Automatically a number of workmen moved in on the man and hustled him back to the detectives. In the shuffle, the man's steel helmet fell off.

"Say," Jack said to Chip in amazement, "why, he's the guy—"

"Right," Chip broke in. "He's the guy we saw in the basement of our apartment house. I finally remembered."

"Howdy, Vern." Lou Loftus sneered at the man, now being held by one of the detectives. "This isn't a bit more than you deserve. Vern's my brother," he explained to everyone. "Vern used to be a magician, during vaudeville days. When all that news broke about a poltergeist in Mrs. Marsh's apartment, I saw that there was a setup I could use. I figured Vern could rig up some stuff that would *really* scare old lady Marsh. This morning Vern grabbed one kid while I grabbed the other one. And he helped me tie them up. I paid you for all these services, didn't I, Vern? But you had something on me. You kept coming around, threatening to



talk if I didn't pay you more. Well, I'm not taking this rap alone, Vern. Jedd was another one I paid to work for me. But he wasn't greedy like you, Vern. Jedd didn't come back for more."

The detectives marched off with Lou and Vern Loftus.

Joe Lahache rushed over to Mrs. Marsh. "It's as good as settled," he told her, smiling with joy. "We will all go back to work now."

Mrs. Marsh smiled, too. "Good," she said, nodding her head. "Joe, I didn't blame you or the men for one minute. Sam Marsh always respected his men. And good qualities like that, I suppose, are contagious."

"He was a very fine man," Lahache declared, moving away as he spoke in his eagerness to notify the Indians that they should go back to work. "And you're a very fine woman."

Bancroft was standing by, waiting for Lahache to leave. He wore a black Homburg, and a dark red rose decorated his lapel.

"Been having a little trouble, Kate?" he said to Mrs. Marsh with a smile.

"Selwyn," she said warmly. "I must apologize to you."

"Nonsense. What reason have you for apologizing to me?"

"Not for what I've done. But for what I've thought."

Bancroft laughed. "I've had plenty of things thought about me in my day. I won't even ask you what your thoughts were. And the reason I won't ask"—he laughed harder—"may be because I'm a coward."

"Mr. Bancroft," Jack said timidly, "I'd like to—"

"You look familiar. Where have I seen you?" the man demanded.

"There are a lot of people who have red hair," Chip said quickly. "Jack's always being taken for somebody else."

"You're familiar, too," Bancroft said to Chip thoughtfully. "Didn't—"

"What I wanted to ask you, Mr. Bancroft," Jack interrupted hurriedly, "is what Jedd and you—"

"How do you know about Jedd and me? No matter. No matter. This will interest you, Kate," he said, turning to Mrs. Marsh again. "Maybe Jedd didn't blackmail

Loftus, but he wanted to make more money than Loftus was paying him. He pestered me. Once he even jumped into a cab I was in. For a price, he told me, he'd see to it that your building wasn't finished on time. I finally called the police and had him arrested."

Ward walked over to Jack and Chip. He took them aside.

"I haven't even thanked you yet," he began.

"Forget it," Jack told him with a smile.

"We better get going," Chip said hastily. "Mrs. Marsh is looking over this way. I'm afraid she's thinking about coming over to thank us."

On the walk from the subway to their apartment building, Chip said, "I've a hunch we're going to have some word from Dad when we get home."

They still had a block to go when Jack stopped.

"Now I remember," he exclaimed, "what's been in the back of my mind, bothering me!"

"Can't you talk while you're walking? I'm anxious to get home."

"Just a second, Chip. Tell me, how did you finally happen to place Loftus' brother?"

Chip started walking, forcing Jack to do the same. "That steel helmet he was wearing," Chip explained.

"It didn't fit him. It sat up on top of his head. It made me think of my pith helmet. Remember when we thought of using it for a disguise? That made me wonder how the guy would look without a helmet. And when I pictured him without the helmet, I remembered right away who he was. He was using that steel helmet for a disguise."

"I guess that about wraps it up," Jack said proudly.

"Hey," Chip exclaimed, "isn't that Professor Jamison walking this way?"

The boys and the professor arrived at the door of the apartment building at the same time.

"What a pleasant surprise," Professor Jamison said. He shook hands with Jack and then with Chip. "I've come to see Mrs. Marsh. I have interesting news for her."

"She's not home," Chip informed the man, shaking his head.

"We just left her," Jack added, "down at the Wyndott Building. That's how we know. Right now, we're kind of anxious to see if there's any mail from our father," he finished.

"Professor Jamison will see her, eventually," the professor said. "I merely wish to report my findings to her. I have removed the chaff from the wheat, the false from the true."

Chip grinned. "There really wasn't a poltergeist, was there?"

"My good sir! Where knowledge is concerned, we should be humble. We shouldn't be too quick to scoff. The poltergeist phenomenon has been substantiated."

"You mean, you found a poltergeist?"

"In this instance, no. There may be a kernel of genuineness, but I found only the chaff of trickery. A sling-shot device that would hurl objects. And this device was triggered by the opening of a door. The use of strong magnets—I would say—for the purpose of moving objects."

"That's neat!" Chip exclaimed. "That's real neat."

"Neat?" the professor repeated, perplexed. "Neat?"

"Yeah," Jack said. "Neat. You know, cool."

"We've got to go, Professor," Chip said hastily.

The two boys made it to their apartment door without incident.

"No light under the door this time," Jack observed as he took the key from his pocket.

"I'm hoping there's a letter. . . ."

Jack held up his hand for silence. "Shhh—"

The boys froze, straining to hear.

Someone was moving around in the apartment.

"Oh, no," Chip said, pained. "Not again."

"Could it possibly be *another* visitor for Detective Wilson?"

A sharp, piercing bark.

"A dog!" Chip exclaimed in astonishment.

"This is really way out in left field," Jack said, as puzzled as his brother.

"Let's ring the bell," Chip suggested. "If we don't like who answers, we'll leave."

"Great idea, Chip. We can say we're taking subscriptions for a magazine or something."

They rang the bell.

The dog began to bark again.

They stood waiting for someone to answer.

A man's voice telling the dog to be quiet grew louder as he approached the door.

"Hey!" Jack exclaimed loudly. "That sounds like Dad!"

"Yeah! It sure does! Yippee!"

Chip started punching at Jack in his excitement. Jack was too happy to put up much resistance.

Finally Mr. Power opened the door. During the wild reunion that followed, a Dalmatian pup barked and leaped upon them in his attempt to get into the act.

"Dad," Chip finally asked as he rubbed the pup's head, "what's with the hound?"

"Just a present for you and Jack. I bought him from an L.A. fireman. Were you surprised? I wanted to surprise you by not telling you when I was coming home."

"What surprised us," Chip told his father, "was hearing Spotty bark when we came up to the door. All I was expecting was some mail from you."

"Spotty!" Jack shook his head. "That's too obvious a name for a Dalmatian."

"No matter what his name," Mr. Power said, "he'll be good to have around. Especially if I ever have to leave you again with nothing for you to do but wait

for me to come back. Like this time."

"We didn't exactly just sit," Chip said slowly, "and do nothing."

Jack kept a straight face. "It was kind of a long wait, though."

"And I haven't forgotten the sight-seeing I promised you," Mr. Power said. "First stop, the Empire State Building. Remember?"

"Oh, sure," Chip muttered.

"You sound kind of dubious. You'll find skyscrapers very interesting. They're really very exciting."

"You think so?" Chip said, trying hard not to laugh.

"They probably are—exciting," Jack said doubtfully. "The least we can do is give one a try." He couldn't restrain a smile now. He pushed the puppy, who came right back to be pushed again. "Am I right, Blaze? Say, that's not a bad name for a fireman's pup."

"Yeah," Chip echoed. "Blaze. That's real cool."

THE POWER BOYS

The Mystery of
THE HAUNTED SKYSCRAPER

The Mystery of
THE FLYING SKELETON

The Mystery of
THE BURNING OCEAN

The Mystery of
THE MILLION-DOLLAR PENNY

